Loneliness is a mismatch of the relationships we have and those we want. It is our internal trigger, letting us know it’s time to seek company as hunger lets us know it’s time to eat. Loneliness is a sign that something needs to change. Anyone can reduce loneliness – their own or that of others – where we live and where we work; in fact, wherever we are.

Key messages:
- Loneliness kills people and communities.
- Regulation kills kindness and reduces action.
- Lonely people are vulnerable. This is a safeguarding issue.
- Building personal and community confidence builds resilience.
- The stepping stones to engagement and education need to be put back.
- There is a real contradiction between society’s ideals and individual experience.
- The process is crucial to neighbourhood approaches to loneliness. You can take the ideas out of the process. You cannot take the process away from the ideas.

What can you do professionally?
Peer support groups around bereavement, isolation, carers, young people, depression
Red Lodge (care home) redevelopment, respite room for carers, adult park, trim trail, seating
Folk Hall becoming heart of community with outreach days, welcomers to groups, talk
Young people, depression
Make every contact count – Smile Campaign – say hello
Raise awareness of loneliness and reduce stigma
Intergenerational approaches that are inclusive and developmental
Information/welcome pack & welcome wagon
Skills exchange, LETS scheme
Community market & hobby and craft fair to share hobbies and produce
Trim trail, seating
Table in café
ESOL classes, communication, activities, a culture coffee morning
Create environments to support people to embrace differences between each other
Develop a phone service for those unable to get out
More weekend activities for all members of community
Useful courses and events so people have a reason to go out
Do preventative work to prevent peer pressure, courses to develop confidence
Safe places for children to go e.g. youth/homework clubs with young people as leaders
Befriending networking services, pair people up with similar interests
Social networking
Provide a space or event that welcomes all cultures to share their language and lifestyle
Job centre and employment services in community hubs/volunteering schemes to help unemployed build confidence to get into work
A hub to meet & exchange skills & play
Community champions – local people who are aware of what's on & can refer people through "word of mouth"
Skills sharing/intergenerational activities e.g. cooking classes, sharing experiences/story telling
Encourage/support parents to spend time with children/activities and events for fathers and children e.g. homework time, street based people's forum
Community growing spaces, raised beds etc.
Let's look for opportunities for land-sharing large gardens/Time Bank
Folk Hall becoming heart of community with outreach days, welcomers to groups, talk table in care home
Integrated youth clubs/working with carers/youth workers to work in the community/streets
More opportunities to get engaged – pop up café or a Big Lunch
Open up and use existing facilities
Targeted support for isolated and single parents – e.g. shopping and support schemes
Supporting families, after-school family fun and holiday activities
Confidence and self-esteem courses
Skill building, courses and supporting opportunities for volunteering
Peer support and self help – develop easily accessible self-help and group therapies
Getting to know your neighbours and your community, neighbourly schemes
Look out for young people and see their potential
Clubs and activities for young people aged 5-25
Gather, promote and share information, What's On guide, community-led newsletter
Encouraging older people to stay involved, adopt a granny/adopt a family
Intergenerational activities, develop living history project or cookery projects
Support people with life transitions – welcome new people to area, welcome packs
Networking and peer support, business hubs
Improving access and more user-friendly community centre and facilities – welcoming environment
Reduce social barriers – welcome and integration of new people
Empowering young people, listen to what they have to say, give them a voice
Bring back the picture house – film club
Improve signposting for all, have a 'What's On', promote good news stories
Improving medical and health support, easier access to counselling/health trainers
Making the most of community facilities
Neighbourly Campaign, call in and chat
Dedicate an hour to Denholme, encourage volunteering
Newsletter to establish interest in community events and activities
Denholme taster sessions e.g. dance, walking group, youth activities
Promote self help, keep in touch with others and encourage community action
Let’s get personal

“Really, I was lonely but you don’t say so, not even to yourself, let alone anyone else.”

Anyone at any age can be lonely – even busy people, even you – whether we are alone or within a group, at work or at home with family.

Loneliness, like confidence and fragility, can come and go – often taking us by surprise.

Some people seek solitude, but few choose to be lonely, primarily because it isn’t good for our physical or mental health.

Loneliness is a real health issue. There are links with early death. The risk factor is similar to smoking and worse than obesity. It is also associated with poor mental health and, more surprisingly, with conditions such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension and dementia.

“I can honestly say I have never felt so lonely as I did when I embarked on this research. Reassessing my life and times of transition and loss, I recognised – for the first time – the many times I had felt lonely, which included starting my new job.

“It is true that when you see it, you really do see it everywhere. It has changed my life. Although I have always been a people person, I used to ‘switch off’ when I had finished work, but now I smile, talk and spare the time for anyone, even when I don’t feel like it. It matters. It changes how I feel and it makes a difference. I can see it in their faces.”

Tracey Robbins, Programme Manager

What can you do about it personally?

Give the gift of time, give someone a little extra time
Don’t give up, get out
Talk about loneliness
Volunteer or do another activity that you enjoy

Ask for help from friends, family or professionals
Create and safeguard your personal convoy, your friendships and social networks
Smile and say hello, even when it’s hard

Look out for opportunities to meet people and cultivate new friendships and social interactions
Expect the best. Lonely people often expect rejection, so instead focus on the positive

You are not alone – anyone can be lonely
Loneliness can affect you, both physically and mentally
Make every contact and conversation count
Be aware and raise awareness
Look after the health and well-being of yourself, your colleagues and your neighbourhood
Building personal and community confidence is what builds resilience

Practical, flexible and low-level informal support is often most effective
Give the gift of time – give a little extra time
Resource prevention as well as intervention
Have a ‘can do’ approach
Ensure community assets are used to their full potential
Ensure groups and activities have welcomers and are open to all

We have learned a great deal over the past three years and look forward to sharing this with you and hearing your views. To find out more about Neighbourhood approaches to loneliness, visit http://www.jrf.org.uk/work/workarea/neighbourhood-approaches-loneliness or contact Tracey Robbins on 07580 071818, email Tracey.Robbins@jrf.org.uk, Twitter @TraceyJRobbins

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