

Tackling loneliness in Cramlington

We are all affected by loneliness at times in our lives.

In the UK, one in four adults feel lonely some of the time, often or always. In recent years young people (aged 16 to 29) are more likely to feel lonely than any other age group. The article below from Cramlington Seaton Valley Primary Care Network (a group of 4 local GP surgeries) explains some of the reasons for feeling lonely and what can be done to help.

Why do feelings of loneliness happen?

Feelings of loneliness can develop for many different reasons. Sometimes there is no obvious cause and it is just the way we feel. At other times it can be caused by things that happen in life like losing a loved-one perhaps through a bereavement or break up, or because of a lack of close friends or a partner to go out with and share interests with. It can also be a feeling of being with other people but still feeling alone. Life changes like moving away from home, staying at home to look after a new baby, having a long-term health condition or being a full-time carer for someone we live with can also make us socially isolated and lonely.

What can help?

Self-help: If you feel lonely there are lots of things that the NHS and mental health charities (Mind and CALM) suggest you try that might help. Not all of them will suit everyone — different things work for different people.

- **Look after yourself** — feeling lonely can affect your wellbeing. Making small changes in day-to-day life can help you feel more able to connect with others. For example try to eat healthily, increase physical activity (walk more, join a local exercise or sports group) or spend more time in nature if you can.
 - The **NHS website** (www.nhs.uk/live-well) has lots of tips on healthy living, including eating a balanced diet, staying a healthy weight, getting exercise, quitting smoking and drinking less alcohol.
- **Keep in touch with people** – try to have regular chats with friends and family or re-connect with people you used to love spending time with. Talking to someone can help you and might help the person you speak to as well.
- **Join a group to connect with and meet people** – look for groups to join in person or on line that focus on things you like or activities you would like to try.
 - The **Cramlington Council Directory** (www.cramlingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/directory) has lots of information on

groups, clubs and organisations in the Cramlington area that are available to join.

- **Do things you enjoy** – spend time outdoors in green spaces, exercise or sport, reading and listening to podcasts or radio shows can boost your mood and stop you from focusing on loneliness and improve wellbeing.
- **Learn more about being comfortable in your own company** - having lots of friends and contacts in your life doesn't mean you won't feel lonely. For many of us, feeling lonely is linked to low self-esteem or self-confidence.
 - The **Mind website** (www.mind.org) has lots of information on confidence and self-esteem and tips on how to build these at all ages from young to old.
- **Share your feelings** – talking to someone you trust can help.
- **Try not to compare yourself to others** - some people only share good things that happen to them, especially on social media, so comparing yourself to others can make you feel lonelier. Plus we can never be sure of what someone else is going through.
- **Connect with others or volunteer to help.**
 - Have a look at the **Cramlington Council Directory** (www.cramlingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/directory) for local groups to join.

Help from your GP surgery:

All local GP practices have access to social prescribers who can help people by looking at the wider issues that affect health and wellbeing, for example dealing with a long-term condition, feeling lonely or isolated, stressed by work, money, or housing. The aim is to help people get more control over their own health and find ways to improve how they feel in a way that suits them best.

- Contact your GP surgery directly if you would like to speak to a social prescriber about loneliness or to a GP, mental health specialist or other clinician about your mental health.

Other sources of help include:

For young people:

- **Kooth** (www.kooth.com) - an online mental health support service for people aged 10 to 25 years. You have to register online to access this free service.
- **School Nurses** - school nurses promote and protect the physical health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people who are school age. Speak to a member of staff in school to find out more.

- **NSPCC Building Connections programme – for young people age 9 to 19 years.**
NSPCC offers a free 11 week course to help young people understand and manage loneliness with a trained befriender. You can be referred by a teacher or other professional such as a GP or social prescriber. Have a look at the NSPCC Learning website (www.learning.nspcc.org.uk) to find out more.

For adults:

- **Qwell** (www.qwell.io) - A free, safe and anonymous online mental wellbeing community for adults aged 18 years old and older.
- **AgeUK Northumberland – for people over the age of 50.**
 - **Friendship Line** — a free telephone friendship service for people over the age of 50 living in Northumberland. If you would like to use the Friendship Line service or you would like to refer a friend or family member to the Friendship Line call: 01670 784 800.
 - **Social Fridays** — weekly social group in Cramlington for friendship, activities, laughter and time for a chat. If you would like to know a bit more about social Fridays, give AgeUK Northumberland a call on 01670 784 800.
 - More information is available on the Age UK Northumberland website (www.ageuk.org.uk/northumberland).
- **Silverline – for people over age 55.**
 - Silverline is a free 24-hour confidential telephone helpline offering information, friendship and advice to people over 55. You can contact Silverline by telephone on 0800 470 8090 or visit the Silverline website (www.silverline.org.uk).
- **Northumberland Recovery College** (www.northumberlandrecoverycollege.co.uk) - a place to learn new skills and meet people who can help support you to recover from mental health difficulties or loneliness. You can join in online or in person. Telephone: 07515 326750 .
- **Northumberland Talking Therapies** (www.mhm.org.uk/talking-therapies-northumberland) - a free service that can help with common mental health problems like stress, anxiety and depression. Telephone: 0300 3030 700.

General resources to support mental wellbeing:

- **NHS Every mind matters** (www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/life-challenges/loneliness) - this NHS website explains ways to manage loneliness and has links to more support if you or someone else needs it.

- **Mind** (www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/loneliness/about-loneliness) – the Mind website has lots of information on dealing with loneliness and offers tips and advice on coping with these feelings.
- **NHS Mental Health self-help guides** (www.selfhelp.cntw.nhs.uk) - a wide range of mental health topics from Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust.
- **NHS Live Well** (www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing) - NHS information on 5 steps to improve mental health and wellbeing.

REFERENCES:

ONS data in Campaign to end loneliness report [Facts and Statistics | Campaign to End Loneliness](#) and GOV.UK [Community Life Survey 2023/24: Loneliness and support networks - GOV.UK](#)