

Police Mutual Loneliness

Most people will feel lonely at some point in their lives. It's a deeply personal experience that in most cases will thankfully pass. For many of us, the feelings of loneliness have increased this year due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. A study by the Mental Health Foundation found that during the spring lockdown, 'social distancing left millions more people in the UK feeling isolated.'

There has been a lot of focus on the impact social isolation during the pandemic will have on people around the world. During this time the majority of people are being asked to stay at home. With these restrictions in place, the feeling of loneliness will increase for many. Families and friends can't meet up, so this time is even worse for those living alone due to the reduced amount of human contact.

During the winter months, with shorter, darker days we generally spend more time indoors, which can have a negative impact on our mental health. Some people suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD) which can increase people's depression and anxiety. So for many people the second lockdown will feel much harder than the first one in the spring.

It's very natural to feel lonely during this time, it's important to be kind to yourself and remember you're not alone in feeling lonely.

Christmas is, for most people, a time to be with loved ones, so it's understandable that some people are already concerned about being separated during this special time. It's a problem that many people in the UK have already had to deal with, when regional restrictions were in force during Eid celebrations and the second national lockdown in England was in place during Diwali.



The long-term effects of loneliness are now being recognised for their damaging effects, such as mental health conditions, cardiovascular issues, high blood pressure and sleep problems. The raised cortisol levels that result from loneliness may have an impact on our health in the short term, and these will impact our bodies in the stress we experience and also have an impact on our sleep. It is therefore important to try and overcome the feeling of isolation.

If you are experiencing any of these feelings, it is particularly important to look after yourself and reach out to your friends and family and seek out connection in this time. Loneliness can affect all ages but it tends to be higher for those in later life, loneliness can have a significant impact on their overall wellbeing.

Loneliness is the unpleasant feeling you get when the contact you have is not the contact you desire.

These feelings aren't the same for everyone, feeling lonely can still occur when you have loving support around you. It's not always the number of social contacts but the perception of those relationships that count. In this way, feeling lonely is different from actually being lonely. Equally, just because you might be socially distancing, it does not automatically follow that you will be feeling lonely.

Loneliness can be caused by many things including leaving the workplace, children or friends moving away, a debilitating health condition or illness, no longer being able to participate in normal hobbies or activities and lack of access to transport.

However, it is possible to find new ways of staying connected and reduce the feelings of loneliness and isolation.



What can you do if you're feeling lonely?

- **Keep in touch with family and friends** – this may be by phone, letter, Skype, Zoom or Social media using technology to connect. You could even invite friends for a virtual coffee or dinner or to watch a film together. You could set up a virtual book club with friends and family and then spend time discussing the book you are reading. Playing games like scrabble online can also help feel like you are connected to others.
- **Ensure you have structure in your day** - this will help break up a long day. Try starting the day with something to make you feel positive. Get up and go to bed at a similar time each day.



- **Plan something every day to look forward to** – this could be a phone call, watching a film, reading a book, enjoying a bath or going for a walk.



- **Take regular exercise** – this could be an online exercise class, a cycle ride or a walk with the dog.
- **Enjoy nature** – spend time in the garden if you have one or finding a window with a view to take in the ‘outside world’ or go for a walk.



- **Keep busy** – plan and spend time carrying out activities within the home.
- **Learn something new** – this could be a new skill or activity, this could be learning a language or trying a new craft.



- **Get involved in local community activities** (within the current government guidelines).
- **Help others by volunteering** (within the current government guidelines).



- **Use strategies for staying in the moment including mindfulness and breathing techniques.** Mindfulness can help people become aware of negative thoughts which can undermine efforts to be more connected to others, for more details click [here](#).
- **Try to focus on the positive** – think about what you have that’s important to you and all the things you can still do.



- **Talk about your worries** – the stigma of loneliness may be reducing due to the current extreme circumstances, so it may be easier for people to talk about how they’re feeling. It’s important to ask for help if you need it. This could be from friends or family or contact your GP.
- **Remember you’re not alone** – although all of our experiences and feelings will be different, the majority of us in the UK are currently living in lockdown, so you are not the only person feeling lonely.
- **Try therapy** – this could be self-help therapy or through a professional.

Sometimes loneliness may improve with time. However, often it's advisable to address the situation in the early stages to prevent it becoming a chronic issue.

We will all experience feelings of loneliness at some point in our lives, but it's important to understand when it's becoming more than just a bad day and you might need someone to help you work through your problems. Loneliness can be a hard emotion to deal with, and talking through your feelings could help.

If you're not quite sure whether you're just feeling lonely, or depressed, it's important to talk to someone, this could be your GP or a professional counsellor.

For Help and support

[Mind](#)

[NHS](#)

[Institute of Family Therapy](#)

[Relate](#)

[Samaritans](#)

[AnxietyUK](#)

[Mental health Org](#)

[Campaign to end loneliness](#)

[Silverline](#)

[Age UK or Age UK Cymru](#)

[How to stay connected with friends, neighbours and family](#)

[Age UK telephone Friendship Services](#)

Police Mutual Services

Worrying about money can be extremely stressful and may lead to mental health conditions. Police Mutual are here to help. We want to break down the stigma surrounding debt and get people talking about money.

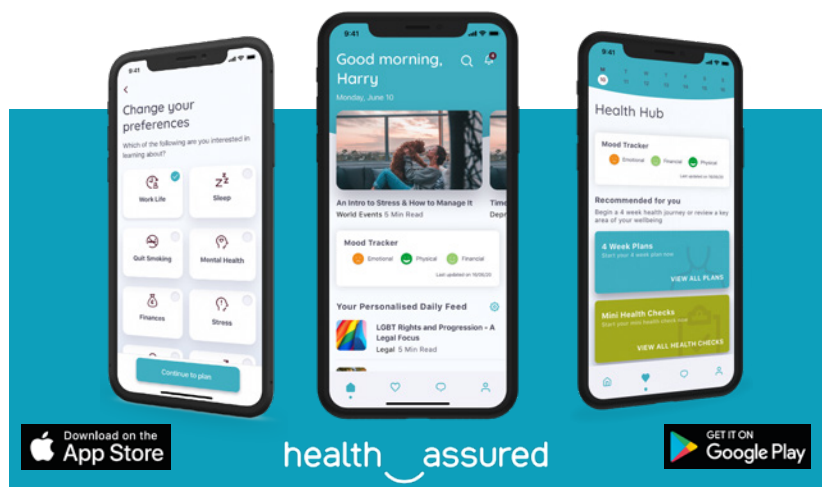
We've teamed up with **PayPlan***, one of the UK's leading free debt advice providers, who offer free and confidential advice to anyone in serious financial difficulties.

They're able to advise you on a range of debt solutions suited to your individual circumstances, helping to protect you and your family with a sustainable way to manage your debt.

Get free and confidential help to combat your debt, call **PayPlan*** on 0800 197 8433.

Our **Care Line** Service provided by Health Assured can offer advice and information, helping with a range of concerns including emotional support. Take a look at the e-portal or download the APP.

Health & Wellbeing e-portal: <https://healthassuredapp.co.uk/>
Username: [policemutual](#) **Password:** [careline](#)



Download the **Health Assured App** and register today - your code is **MHA107477**

For more information on how Police Mutual are supporting you during the coronavirus pandemic click [here](#).

Call us 01543 441630
Visit policemutual.co.uk

We're open from
9am - 5pm Mon - Fri

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