Loneliness during the pandemic

Olivia Field, Head of Health and Resilience Policy, British Red Cross
@OliviaMayaField @RedCrossPolicy
#TacklingLoneliness

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What is loneliness?

Loneliness

- A negative feeling

- About the quality of social relationships – something missing / lacking

- **You can still feel lonely in a crowd**

Social isolation

- More objective than loneliness

- About quantity of social relationships – lack social ties / chances to integrate

- **Not always negative**

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Why is this <u>important</u>?

- Connected communities and individuals are more resilient

- Devastating impact across our services – e.g. for

  - refugees

  - victims of terrorist attacks

  - people with health / mobility issues

- The most common underlying issues for people using our health & social care services

- **A personal crisis can cause loneliness… and loneliness can make the crisis worse**

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Loneliness <u>before</u> Covid-19

One in five adults often or always lonely

An increased risk of a range of **health conditions**

200,000 older people not had a conversation with a friend/relative for more than a month

Affected **people of all ages**

Major life events or **transitions** can be key triggers for loneliness

Can't be eliminated… but can **do more to stop becoming chronic**

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Loneliness during Covid-19

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Life after lockdown:
Tackling Loneliness among those left behind

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- **Life after lockdown** draws on findings from a collection of polling, insights and evaluations recently gathered by the British Red Cross.

- We warned that although social distancing and lockdown measures may continue to be eased in time, a significant cohort of the population would remain lonely, and many would find themselves left behind.

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Key findings

Over a quarter (28%) of UK adults agree that they worry something will happen to them and no one will notice

41% of UK adults report feeling lonelier since lockdown.

31% of UK adults often feel alone as though they have no one to turn to.

37% of UK adults agree their neighbours are like strangers to them.

33% of UK adults haven't had a meaningful conversation with someone within the last week.

One third of UK adults are concerned that their loneliness will get worse

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A greater risk of loneliness among people who:

- live alone
- self-isolated or shielded
- live with young children
- are from BAME backgrounds
- younger generations
- have a long-standing physical or mental impairment, health condition, illness, or disability

The things I miss most is not talking to people.
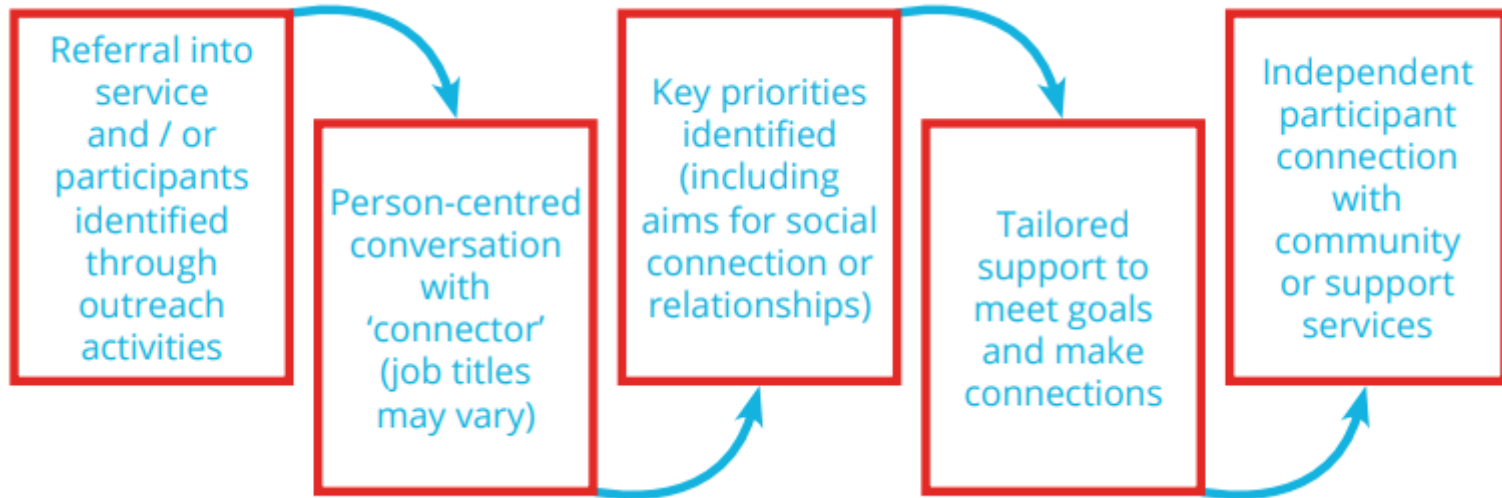(Connecting Communities service user)

Covid-19 has meant a loss in social support for refugees and people seeking asylum

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Our Community Connectors/ social prescribing

Referral into service and / or participants identified through outreach activities

Person-centred conversation with 'connector' (job titles may vary)

Key priorities identified (including aims for social connection or relationships)

Tailored support to meet goals and make connections

Independent participant connection with community or support services

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Continuing to tackle loneliness

Regular phone calls, online activities and wellbeing packages with information and activities to do at home are helping people feel less alone.

Around three in five UK adults have found messages or support from friends a useful way to stay positive and connected.
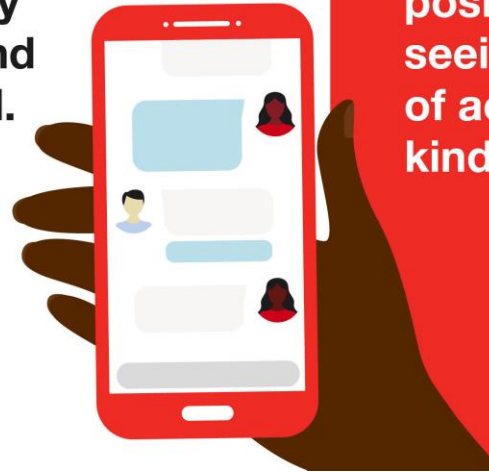
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A quarter of UK adults have felt more connected and positive after seeing stories of acts of kindness.

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Digital exclusion

1 in 10 UK adults are estimated to be digitally excluded (Ofcom, June 2020)

"I do think it would help me feel better to do more of those video calls. I felt uplifted and better."
(Connecting Communities service user)

- While digital tools and innovations have been helpful for many, certain groups are at risk of being excluded.

- Reasons range from not being able to afford devices/ internet to not knowing how to use them.

"My children… are newcomers, so learning online is difficult as we don't have a laptop, they are doing school exercises on a mobile phone."
(Refugee service user)

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Tianna Stephens

Generations Digital Volunteer for Tackling Loneliness Digitally

Learn more here: https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/get-help-with-loneliness

What we're expecting next

- Not all have felt able to take advantage of the easing of lockdown and shielding over the summer.

- Previous coping mechanisms have often felt unattainable.

- There is significant discomfort over talking about loneliness with friends and family.

- Changes to someone's employment status can impact on their routine, sense of purpose, social interactions and their ability to afford to socialise and access services that will help them cope.

- Future lockdowns could have a significant role in worsening and entrenching feelings of loneliness and isolation.

- Solutions look different from person to person but people have told us professional mental health and emotional support, socially distanced physical activity, speaking to friends and family would help.

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The need to tackle loneliness over the winter period & in recovery

- Civil society organisations should continue to tackle loneliness, share learning and prioritise those most at risk.
- Governments across the four nations should launch a plan to tackle loneliness during the winter.
- Governments should ensure those most at risk of loneliness are able to access the mental health and emotional support they need to cope and recover from COVID-19.
- In the medium to longer term, tackling loneliness should be built into COVID-19 recovery plans.

The loneliest people feel less able to cope.

60 per cent of those who report feeling always or often lonely agree that they are confident in feeling able to cope and recover from the pandemic, compared to 82 per cent of those who report being rarely or never lonely.

"I ain't got nobody. I've just got me and my dog. It's a blooming nightmare... I feel lost."

(Connecting Communities service user)

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Thank you

@OliviaMayaField
@RedCrossPolicy