

Loneliness minister: “It’s more important than ever to take action”

This Loneliness Awareness Week, the Loneliness Minister Baroness Barran has warned we are still in a ‘critical stage’ of tackling loneliness.

Baroness Barran has said that many of those who felt lonely before the pandemic will continue to do so as lockdown restrictions are eased and recognises that some people will have lost their confidence. The Loneliness Minister is urging everyone who may be feeling lonely, or isolated to reach out to someone, and if they know someone who they feel might be lonely, or isolated, to get in touch.

Small charities and organisations tackling loneliness in their communities can apply to the second round of the £4 million Local Connections Fund from 28 June 2021. The [first round of funding](#) helped more than 840 organisations across England to connect small groups of people through projects and activities they enjoy.

To mark the week, members of the Government’s [Tackling Loneliness Network](#) are launching multiple projects to help the country tackle loneliness; including the Connection Coalition’s Loneliness Advice chatbot service on WhatsApp.

This groundbreaking new service will enable people feeling lonely to simply message 07902 922 908 on the app to access information and resources from organisations including the Marmalade Trust, Jo Cox Foundation, Age UK, The Mix, The British Red Cross and the #LetsTalkLoneliness campaign.

TikTok is launching a brand new challenge this week, encouraging creators and users to talk openly about their experiences with loneliness, and their favourite ways to help others using the hashtag #LetsTalkLoneliness. The challenge will run until Friday 18th June.

As part of the government’s ongoing [#LetsTalkLoneliness campaign](#), the government is urging everyone to:

- Check in with a neighbour, recognising that some people will be keen to get together in person once possible, while others might be more cautious.
- Keep in touch with friends, family and neighbours – for example calling someone or writing a letter, asking how they feel about getting out and about again, and considering whether going together would help both of you feel more confident.
- Contact organisations – there’s a list of organisations on the Let’s Talk Loneliness [website](#) which can offer support.

- Set a routine with online activities, regular tasks or by volunteering. Rejoin groups that might not have met for some time, and think about how you can welcome others back, especially people not feeling very confident.
- Help out through volunteering with local groups or by offering a regular conversation to someone feeling isolated. In many cases you will still be able to do this over the phone or online, if you prefer.

UK Government Minister for Loneliness, Baroness Barran, said:

Although life is beginning to feel closer to normal for many people, we are still in a critical stage when it comes to tackling loneliness. There is a large number of people who felt lonely before the pandemic and will continue to do so as lockdown restrictions ease

This Loneliness Awareness Week, I'm urging everyone to take note of our tips to help reduce loneliness. Checking in with someone, making sure you keep in touch with family, finding organisations who can offer support via www.letstalkloneliness.co.uk, or helping out in your local community.

I'm really excited to see some of the projects launched by the Tackling Loneliness Network come to fruition. The new chatbot service on WhatsApp will make help and advice easily accessible to people across the country, and many more partners are carrying out work to contribute towards ending loneliness.

Niamh Sweeney, director of EMEA public policy, WhatsApp, said:

We know that in challenging times WhatsApp is uniquely placed to help provide support for those who need it most. We wanted to partner with the Connection Coalition to help connect anyone experiencing loneliness with organisations that can provide them with easy and secure access to vital information and advice.

Blondel Cluff CBE, Chair of The National Lottery Community Fund, said:

Loneliness affects people of all ages and from all walks of life and we know that, because of the pandemic, many people are experiencing isolation for the very first time. The first round of Local Connections funding demonstrated the huge impact that small grants can have when tackling loneliness at a local level, empowering organisations to make a change in their communities.

Thanks to National Lottery players we are now able to award £2

million to support hundreds of other organisations and communities across the country, and we are proud to be working alongside Government to encourage people to tackle loneliness and build social connections.

Rich Waterworth, the General Manager of TikTok EU & UK, TikTok, said:

TikTok is built on the idea of community, and that whatever passion you have, whether it's reading or cooking, DIY or skydiving, you will find a community on TikTok. That shared enjoyment and feeling of connection is one of the most powerful tools in the fight against loneliness.

I am incredibly proud that TikTok has been able to support #LetsTalkLoneliness and that our community has come together to share their own stories, provide advice and offer connection. I hope that will inspire others to take action to help someone they know feel a little less lonely at what we know continues to be a difficult time for everyone.

The Tackling Loneliness Network, which is formed of over 70 organisations, includes Royal Mail, which has launched its postmark, so every single letter posted across the country this week will feature the #LetsTalkLoneliness stamp. For those in London, the BT Tower will be displaying tips for alleviating loneliness in yourself and others.

The Local Connections Fund is made up of £2 million from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and £2 million from The National Lottery Community Fund.

Loneliness Minister Baroness Barran today held the first ever meeting with with her Japanese counterpart Minister for Loneliness, Tetsushi Sakamoto, to discuss how both countries are continuing to tackle the global issue of loneliness.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- Connection Coalition loneliness advice chatbot on WhatsApp – simply add 07902 922 908 to your WhatsApp contacts, and then send a message saying 'hi' to bring up a menu featuring information and resources from organisations including Marmalade Trust, Jo Cox Foundation, Age UK, The Mix, The British Red Cross and the #LetsTalkLoneliness campaign. From here, people can choose the support or advice they may need for themselves or to support others.
- [Read the National Lottery Community Fund's announcement on the Local Connections Fund.](#)