

# Loneliness Minister: Write letters to people isolating at home

People should consider writing letters and cards to those still isolating as lockdown measures ease to ensure they don't feel forgotten, the Loneliness Minister urged today (15 June).

Baroness Barran is encouraging the public to reach out to friends, family and neighbours who are elderly or otherwise clinically vulnerable. This includes those who are pregnant, aged 70 or older or with an underlying health condition.

This builds on the Prime Minister's announcement last week that single adult households – those living alone or single parents with children under 18 – can now form a "support bubble" with one other household, meaning they can visit and stay overnight. This move will particularly support those who live by themselves, who are lonely and struggling with being unable to see friends and family.

As part of the #Let'sTalkLoneliness campaign, which launched a year ago today, the Government is offering helpful advice to tackle loneliness, such as ways to reach out to someone who might be feeling lonely, how to volunteer safely, joining an online group, and signposting to sources of support.

A government partnership with the Post Office and Royal Mail will see a "Let's Talk Loneliness" postmark stamped on most letters delivered during Loneliness Awareness Week (15-19 June), to raise awareness of loneliness and help tackle the stigma.

To mark the week, the Loneliness Minister will also be writing letters to check in on friends and family, and is encouraging the public to do the same and make connections. This follows new research from the Royal Mail which shows that nearly three quarters of people (74%) feel that writing letters has positive mental health benefits.

Today, the Government has also announced the organisations who will receive a share of £5 million to reduce loneliness, which was pledged as part of the Chancellor's £750 million support package for charities. The successful organisations are providing vital support for a wide range of vulnerable people at risk of loneliness at this time, including the elderly, veterans, and people with disabilities.

## **Minister for Loneliness, Baroness Barran, said:**

The last few months have brought loneliness to the forefront of our minds. We all have a role in being kind and looking out for each other, and as some of us begin to regain some normality we cannot forget those who may need to stay at home for longer and could be at risk of feeling lonely.

Writing letters might be a slightly forgotten art but it's more important than ever to connect with people, and putting pen to paper is an excellent way of making sure our friends, family and neighbours know we're thinking about them.

The beneficiaries of the £5 million loneliness fund are:

- **The English Football League Trust** will receive £810,000 to make onward grants to its Football Club Community Organisations in 32 deprived locations across England, with the aim of connecting more older people at risk of loneliness. Activities include befriending phone calls, online social groups, a pen-pal scheme, social action from young people taking part in the National Citizen Service and socially distanced 'garden gate' conversations.
- **The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen And Families Association – Forces Help (SSAFA)** will use £500,000 to support veterans experiencing loneliness and their families across the UK. The funding will support a new socially-distanced visiting service, expansion of telephone helpline, a one-to-one mentoring service and targeted activities for groups more at risk of loneliness.
- **Sense** will receive £500,000 to support children and families and adults with complex disabilities. The funding will enable them to expand and scale up their 'Connect 4 Service' which helps disabled people form social connections and includes buddying services, online activities for young carers, specialist virtual childcare and family sessions and activities sent through the post.
- £500,000 will go to the **Alzheimer's Society** who will continue to support people with dementia and their carers through welfare and companion calls to support their wellbeing and provide informal chats and weekly 'singing for the brain' sessions – vocal exercises that help improve brain activity and well-being.
- **The British Red Cross** will receive £610,000 to support young people, BAME communities, refugees, the digitally excluded and people more at risk of loneliness because of their health issues. It will enable them to expand their connecting communities work, with a focus on virtual group activities and 1:1 support to digitally excluded people, helping to get them online. People living in Durham, Barking and Dagenham, Stockport and Plymouth will be among the first to benefit.
- £500,000 for **Home-Start UK** will help them provide onward grants to local Home Starts to support new mums at risk of loneliness. Their service will include regular telephone calls, online groups to connect families

with each other and working with local partners to support crisis response.

- **The Royal National Institute of Blind People** has received £500,000 to further support blind and partially sighted people through adapting and expanding telephone groups, online resources and piloting socially-distanced face to face support.
- £500,000 will be allocated to **Mind** who will make onward grants to local groups to provide mental health support for older people, new parents, those who are disabled, digitally excluded and young people. This will include listening, befriending and wellbeing support services targeting these groups.
- **The Carers Trust** will receive £500,000 to make onward grants to local charities in their network.

**David Gold, Director of Public Affairs and Policy, Royal Mail, said:**

Handwritten correspondence is a very powerful way of connecting and showing someone close that you care; particularly during these difficult and sometimes isolating times. Keeping the nation connected is of vital importance to us, so we're delighted to partner with the Government on this initiative.

**Nick Read, Chief Executive of the Post Office, said:**

Loneliness can have serious impacts on a person's health and wellbeing. As a business, we are all about keeping people connected and there are so many ways to keep in touch with friends and family today. Letters can add a real personal touch and make someone's day. We are stronger together and community has never been as important as it is now.

The Tackling Loneliness Network, a group of high-profile charities, businesses, organisations and public figures, will have their inaugural meeting this week to explore initiatives to connect groups at risk of loneliness and isolation, encourage individuals and organisations to take practical actions, and consider how to sustain the good community nature from the coronavirus outbreak. The group was convened by the Government in collaboration with the Connection Coalition, organised by the Jo Cox Foundation.

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors**

## **Three tangible actions for anyone feeling lonely and three actions for people wanting to help**

If you are lonely you can:

- Keep in touch with friends, family and neighbours
- Ask for help if you need shopping, medicine or are feeling lonely
- Set a routine with online activities, regular tasks or by volunteering

**If you are worried about someone who is lonely:**

- Phone a friend or send a letter to a family member you think may be lonely
- Smile, wave or chat from a safe distance with a neighbour
- Help out through volunteering by picking up food, medicine or by offering regular conversation to someone living alone

For further information see [LetsTalkLoneliness.co.uk](https://lets-talk-loneliness.co.uk)

Over the last two years, the UK Government has been leading the way on tackling loneliness:

- It created the world's first Minister for Loneliness and published the world's first Government loneliness strategy in October 2018, containing 60 commitments from nine Government departments. Implementation of the strategy is ongoing and the Government published a first annual report in January 2020 setting out our progress;
- It launched the first Government fund dedicated to reducing loneliness worth £11.5 million, which is supporting 126 projects to transform the lives of thousands of lonely people across England;
- It launched the inaugural #LetsTalkLoneliness campaign in June 2019 to help raise awareness and tackle stigma.

Members of the Tackling Loneliness Network include: BBC, Premier League, Facebook, ITV, British Red Cross, Jo Cox Foundation, Vodafone, Zurich, Nationwide Building Society, Campaign to End Loneliness, BT, Post Office, Royal Mail, Ukie, Aviva, Sports and Recreation Alliance, English Football

League, JC Decaux UK, Samaritans, Age UK, Arts Council England, Co-op Foundation, The Cares Family, University College London, Libraries Connected, Sense, Manchester Museum, Nesta Challenges and Seema Kennedy, former Co-Chair of the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness.

Royal Mail cannot guarantee that specific items of mail posted during the period 15 – 19 June 2020 will include the #Let'sTalkLoneliness postmark.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size for national statistics was 2,082 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 7th – 8th May 2020. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).