

New fund for frontline organisations tackling loneliness

- Government launches £2 million grant fund for organisations tackling loneliness
- New funding comes one year since publication of landmark Loneliness Strategy
- Builds on existing £11.5 million Building Connections Fund and support for community space and tech projects

A new £2 million fund is being launched to help organisations at the frontline of tackling loneliness across the country, Minister for Civil Society Baroness Barran announced today.

The funding aims to support frontline, grassroots organisations that bring people together and help them build social connections. These could include community cafés, street parties, coffee mornings or local walking groups.

The investment will help small organisations promote themselves more widely, help fund the use of suitable venues and accessible transport, and bring established groups together to best serve local people at risk of loneliness.

The funding marks one year since the publication of the Government's landmark Loneliness Strategy which outlined almost 60 commitments to end loneliness.

This included funding 126 projects through its £11.5 million Building Connections Fund – the first Government fund ever dedicated to reducing loneliness, jointly funded with the Co-op Foundation and National Lottery Community Fund.

Baroness Barran, Minister for Loneliness, said:

Loneliness is one of the biggest public health challenges our country faces and we are committed to tackling it head on. This new fund is a fitting way to mark one year since the launch of our landmark strategy and will help grassroots organisations address the issue in their own communities.

I have had the privilege of meeting so many people, young and old, who are unsung heroes and heroines in their communities, bringing people together through cafés, reading groups, arts and crafts, gardening, sports and more. They have told me how they want a chance to celebrate their work, together with other local groups, so they can raise awareness and encourage more people to be involved.

This new investment shows how much we value their work and our continued commitment to beating loneliness.

The commitments in the Loneliness Strategy also included:

- Social prescribing: supporting all local health and care systems to implement social prescribing schemes that can refer patients to support programmes to inspire social connections across the country by 2023;
- Building a network of employers to take action on loneliness: more than 30 local and national organisations have signed up to an Employer Pledge to provide help and support to lonely people;
- Working in partnership with Royal Mail to trial 'Safe and Connected': An innovative pilot was launched to enable postal workers in Whitby, Liverpool and New Malden in Kingston-upon-Thames to help lonely older people on their usual delivery rounds.

Over the past year, the Government has also:

- Launched the [#LetsTalkLoneliness campaign](#), which aims to raise awareness of loneliness, recognise the signs and tackle the stigma surrounding it. The campaign was developed through a partnership between Government, business and charities, including the Co-op Foundation, the British Red Cross, the Campaign to End Loneliness, Mind, Public Health England, the Jo Cox Foundation and the Marmalade Trust;
- Launched the £1.6 million Space to Connect fund in partnership with the Co-op Foundation, to unlock community spaces where people can come together such as community cafés, art spaces, or extending opening hours of community buildings; and
- Invested £1 million in the Nesta Tech to Connect Challenge Prize, to encourage the design of solutions to tackle social isolation and promote community cohesion. The announcement comes ahead of the Minister visiting 'Body and Soul', an expansion project based in Hackney, which is using a grant from the Building Connections Fund to deliver a dialectical therapy skills group, trauma yoga sessions and weekly creative spaces – reducing social isolation in the process.

Since her appointment, the Minister has travelled across the country to chair a number of events with representatives from charities, sports and youth clubs, social enterprises, responsible businesses and local groups to build on the positive work of the Civil Society Strategy and Loneliness Strategy. This has been with a particular emphasis on building stronger connections between people and helping to develop their sense of belonging.

These relationships will help to inform the Government's future work, including its first loneliness annual report, highlighting achievements and next steps, which will be published at the end of 2019.

ENDS

Notes to Editor:

Further details on the funding application process, including eligibility and when it will open, will follow in due course.

Ten top tips for if you're feeling lonely

1. Remember you are not alone – lots of people of all ages and backgrounds feel lonely. Millions of people in the UK say they are often or always lonely.
2. Think about what is making you feel lonely – Anyone can experience loneliness at some point in their life, but the reasons why will vary from person to person. Taking time to think about what's causing you to feel lonely may help with finding what could help you feel differently.
3. Be proactive. Look at what resources are out there – If you're going to the doctors or your local library have a look for leaflets about any local events, exercise classes, book clubs, coffee mornings, playgroups etc. that may help you connect with your community. Alternatively you can also refer yourself to [LetsTalkLoneliness.co.uk](https://www.lets-talk-loneliness.co.uk)
4. Take up a new hobby that can be done in pairs or groups like learning a language? If you don't like it you can always change your mind and do something else.
5. Don't be afraid to ask for help – Try opening up to someone who you feel comfortable talking to, whether that's a member of your family, a friend, your carer or even GP.
6. Accept help when it's presented to you – It might be a friend or a neighbour just offering for you to go round for a brew. Don't think that you're a nuisance or they're not offering because they want to see you. Try not to worry about how you're being perceived.
7. Access free services – There is lots of support out there which could help you address some of the causes of your loneliness. See below for more information on organisations that can help. – same as above
8. Volunteer – Volunteering can be a great way to meet new people and make new connections. You could help out at a local charity shop, or use your skills to support others.
9. Surround yourself with activity. If you're feeling alone, why not pop out to a coffee shop or somewhere where there's some activity going on. You may meet someone else in a similar situation to you and it might spark a conversation. Try to smile at people; having someone smile back could change your day.
10. Join groups online. If you can't leave the house try joining an online community who share similar interests to you. You can also try inviting people into your home if you find it difficult to go out.

Top tips for identifying loneliness

1. Loneliness is a subjective feeling experienced by people of all ages and all backgrounds. Identifying people who are lonely or at risk of loneliness therefore might seem tricky. Here are some simple tips that could help:
2. Remember that loneliness is often triggered by key life transitions, such as loss of mobility, taking on caring duties, bereavement, developing a health condition, leaving school, separation, retirement, becoming a parent, unemployment, moving to a new area and so on.
3. Loneliness can also be triggered by money problems, stress, being bullied or treated with less respect.
4. Ask whether people feel they can talk to others, whether they are satisfied with their relationships, how often they leave the house, how

often they feel left out, as though they lack companionship and whether they feel isolated from others.

5. Don't ever assume someone isn't lonely. Just because they have an active social life doesn't mean they're not experiencing loneliness. Anyone can be lonely but everyone can help. Ask questions; they might not show the obvious signs.

*Courtesy of the British Red Cross