

Lonely in Herts

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Loneliness is a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship, which happens when we have a mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that we have, and those that we want.

Loneliness can impact at any point throughout the lifecourse.

Loneliness can affect people of all ages and from all backgrounds - from the bullied school child, to the new mother, to someone coping with mental health issues through to the pensioner who has outlived her friends and immediate family.

Feeling lonely becomes a major problem when people are overwhelmed by it – when it is chronic - and can't, for many reasons, take action to tackle it.

%

9 million+ people in the UK across all adult ages – are either ‘always’ or ‘often’ lonely

Action for Children found that 43% of 17 – 25 year olds had experienced problems with loneliness

24% of parents said they were ‘always’ or ‘often’ lonely

40% of disabled people reported feeling isolated or lonely on any given day

8 out of 10 carers have felt lonely or isolated as a result of looking after a loved one.

Loneliness through the life course

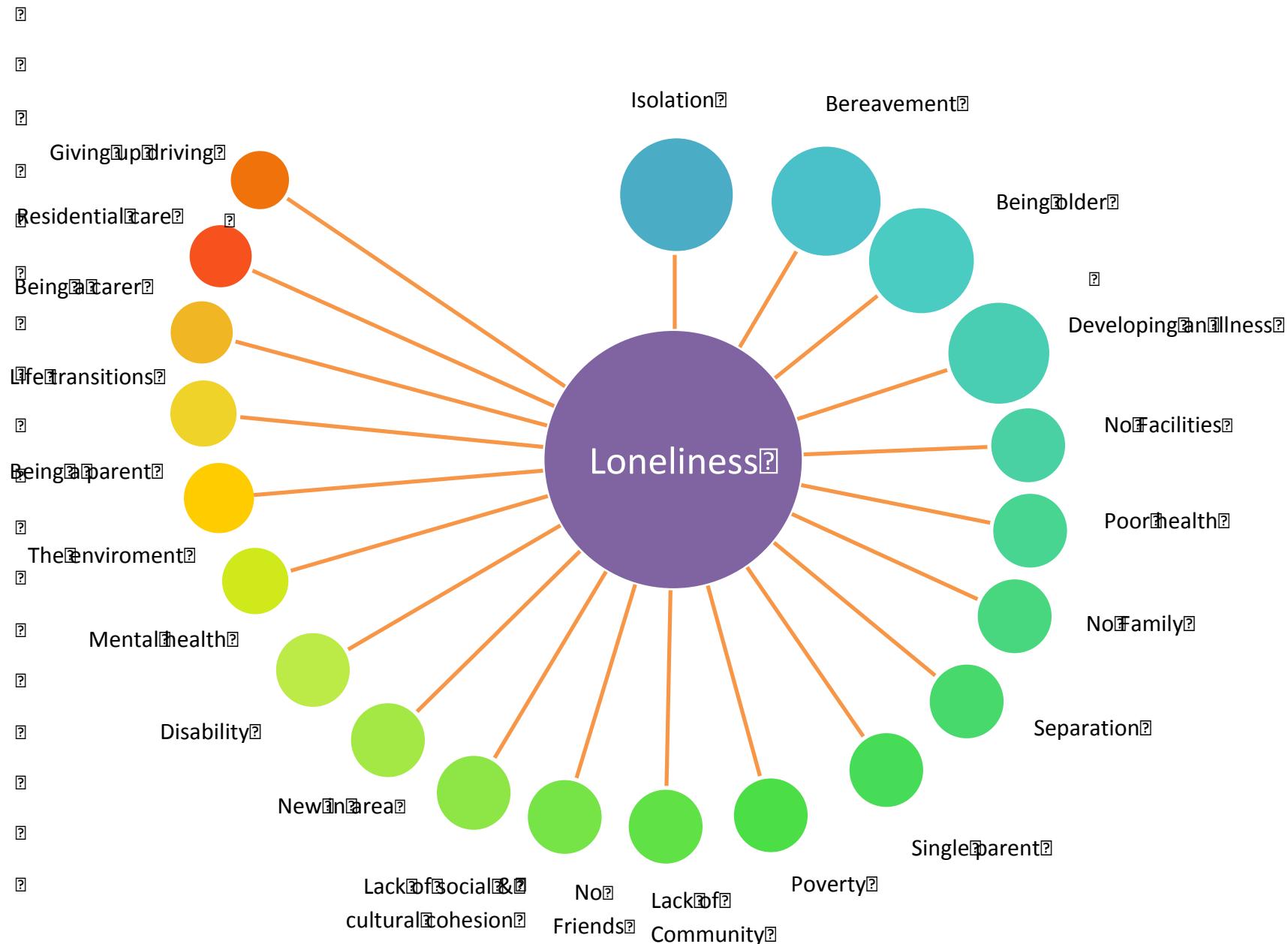
Loneliness tends to peak during early adolescence, drops between young adulthood and middle age, and then rises again in old age.

This is closely associated with mental wellbeing.

Statistically the loneliest in our community are those aged 80 and over.

There are certain transitional periods in our life when loneliness particularly impacts:

- Retirement
- Leaving care
- Divorce
- Becoming a carer
- Leaving education
- While unemployed
- Leaving the armed forces / release from prison



Nationally and locally...

- Nationally over 1.1 million older people say they are ‘always’ or ‘often’ experiencing loneliness, this equates to over 20,000 in Hertfordshire
- 12% of older people (24,000 in Herts) report that they feel trapped in their own home
- 24% (48,000 in Herts) do not go out socially at least once a month
- Around 75,000 older people live alone in Hertfordshire

Loneliness harms physical health

Lonely older people are likely to be...

- Smokers / drinkers
- Overweight and not eat well
- Skipping medication
- Undertaking less physical activity

Accordingly, an increased likelihood of

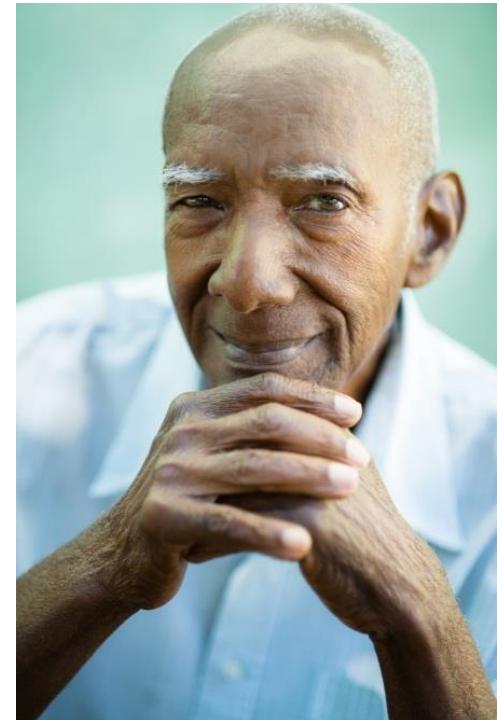
- Diabetes
- Stroke
- Coronary heart disease
- Chronic lung disease
- Arthritis and mobility impairment



Loneliness harms mental health

Linked to...

- 64% increased risk of developing clinical dementia
- Development of anxiety and depression
- Correlates with self-reported poor health and psychological distress
- Can predict suicidal behaviours in older age



The “bottom line...”

Lonely older people experience poor quality of life, get sicker, and die quicker.



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