

Social isolation and loneliness

A short fact sheet

What is social isolation?

Social isolation is when you feel alone (sometimes despite being surrounded by people) and not feeling a part of the wider society. We are social creatures by nature and feeling isolated can often be detrimental to a person's well-being.

There are many things that can increase feelings of social isolation including bereavement, relationship breakdown, redundancy, retirement, being a lone carer, having a baby, moving home, disability, poor mobility, lack of access to transport, discrimination, fear of new situations, social anxiety or shyness.

Possible signs and symptoms that develop when someone is feeling isolated are reduced confidence, lower self-esteem, depression, anxiety, shortened attention span/ increased forgetfulness, general ill-health or increased risk of substance or alcohol misuse.

Techniques to help

Explore your area - Spend time looking at what is in your area. Most areas have a range of activities that you could attend to meet likeminded people. Is there something you have previously enjoyed or always wanted to do? Lancashire Wellbeing Service may be able to help you find activities in your area.

Financial - Look out for free activities such as walking groups or become a volunteer.

Technology - Use web cams, chat rooms and social network sites. However it is not advisable to use it as a complete substitute for seeing people face to face.

Befriending and mentoring - There are services who offer friendship/support to people in their homes.

Social anxiety - Use some relaxation techniques such as deep, controlled breathing, muscle relaxation or distractions, such as concentrating on certain objects in the room.

Look after yourself - Part of being emotionally well is being physically well so make sure you eat well, do enough exercise and get enough sleep.

Transport - There are free bus passes for those who meet certain criteria such as old age or having a disability (www.direct.gov.uk). There are also volunteer driving services in some areas. Most towns have a Dial-A-Ride service that provides low cost transport to those eligible to use it.

Bereavement - People around you will want to offer you their support and to allow you to talk about how you are feeling. If this is not possible then contact local support groups.

Parents - There is a variety of activities that parents can take part in including social groups that are focussed around the parents or groups that are focussed around the children playing. Contact children's centres, Sure Start Centres and libraries.

Stopping working - Try setting an alarm and getting up at the same time every day. Volunteering is an excellent way to keep you active, meet new people and boost your CV if you're looking for a new job.

Physical disability and mobility issues - Plan any journey before you leave and allow time to and allow time to sit and rest.

Further help

<http://lancswellbeing.wixsite.com/lws2016>

www.wlcvs.org www.lacvs.org.uk www.bprcvs.co.uk www.lancastercvs.org.uk

www.communitycvs.org.uk