

Creating Connecting Conversations: How to tackle loneliness and social isolation in the Howardian Hills

The past year has been a particularly difficult time for our communities and businesses, with many people isolated from family, friends and colleagues and experiencing loneliness as a result.

Loneliness is something that all of us will experience at some point in our lives and for many, it is a long-term condition that has implications for health and wellbeing. Research conducted by the [Red Cross](#) as far back as 2016, showed that almost half of the population said that they felt lonely 'sometimes' and, perhaps more worryingly, almost a fifth of the population felt lonely 'often' or 'always'.

Surrounded by stigma, it can often be hard to have those initial small conversations about loneliness that can help people to reach out and create connections within their local community, but it is often those small conversations which can have a significant impact on someone's life.

Making Every Contact Count

The resources below are designed to work alongside the Public Health England [Making Every Contact Count](#) (MECC) programme.

- The [Yorkshire and Humber Public Health Network](#) MECC Link website has more information on how the Making Every Contact Count material can be used to tackle loneliness using the framework:
 - **Ask** – Asking open ended questions about hobbies networks and support systems.
 - **Assist** – Questions around how someone might be able to change the situation they are in.
 - **Act** - Conversation starters on how to seek or access help and support.
- They also have videos and information of how to practically use the framework on their [website](#).
- If you would like additional training, anyone is able to access the MECC training on the [e-Learning for Healthcare](#) website. The website also contains information on the 5 Ways to Wellbeing framework, a useful tool for those looking to safeguard their own mental health.



Signposting to Services

It is often difficult to know where to signpost someone to if they need further support.

- The [Living Well Team](#) work with individuals and their carers who are isolated, vulnerable, bereaved, lacking confidence, or perhaps on the borderline of needing health and social care services. They support people to access their local community, and help them to find their own solutions to their health and wellbeing goals. This helps to reduce loneliness and isolation, and to prevent or resolve issues for people, including preventing hospitalisation. A referral from a professional is not required and you can self-refer.

To find information about the range of assistance, groups and services on offer in your area the following websites are a useful starting point:

- [North Yorkshire Connect](#) is the free community directory for North Yorkshire, providing information about the diverse range of community groups, activities and services in the area.
- Community Smart and the Community Support Organisation for Ryedale have put together a [toolbox](#) to provide useful information and support to residents in Ryedale.
- [Easingwold and District Community Care Association](#) have a range of information on their website for Hambleton residents.



Creating Connecting Conversations is a collaborative project between the [Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#) and [The Loneliness Campaign North Yorkshire](#).

Further resources produced as part of The Loneliness Campaign are outlined below:

- The Loneliness Campaign's strategy for tackling loneliness in North Yorkshire, *Be Social, Be Well* is available to [download in full](#), or you can read the executive summary [here](#).
- To discover your own risk of loneliness in later life, take the [Staying Social, Staying Well](#) quiz which gives some great tips and ideas on how to reduce the risk.
- You can find all the MECC links along with a range of other resources in the [Stronger Together](#) toolkit. Don't forget to take a look at the [Building Connected Communities](#) poster.
- Why not work with your local parish or town council and make new residents feel more welcomed by creating your own Welcome Pack? Download the template [here](#).
- Listen to some of the voices in our [Voices of North Yorkshire](#) campaign as they talk about their own loneliness and the impact that it has had on them.
- Stand up to youth loneliness by downloading free resources [here](#).