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Improving healthcare
for older people



Health impacts of loneliness in older people

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Position statement on loneliness and social isolation





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Loneliness in older people



- Increased risk of loneliness in older people

- Bereavement
- Poor health/mobility
- Cognitive impairment
- Carers





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Impact on physical health



- Older people experiencing loneliness more likely to:
 - Develop frailty
 - Require emergency care
 - Have more than 12 GP visits in 12 months
 - Be admitted to a care home
- Effect is comparable to smoking and obesity



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Impact of social isolation and loneliness on mental health

- Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Suicidal thoughts
 - Dementia
-
- Carers
 - Care homes

BGS LONELINESS WEBINAR 2020





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Role of healthcare professionals



- Identification and treatment of health issues that limit independence
- Be alert for signs of depression, cognitive impairment and dementia
- Pro-actively ask people about loneliness
- Be alert to the needs of carers and that carers might not volunteer information about their own difficulties
- Comprehensive frailty assessments within primary care



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Role of health and social care systems



- Ensure that older people are not excluded from new services based on digital technology
- Breaking down barriers: Integration between primary care, community health and mental health services
- Transforming communities: The community mental health framework
- Learning and recovering from COVID
- Maximising the potential of social prescribing and ensuring it meets the needs of all groups
 - Carers, people living with dementia and mental illness, LGBT+ and BAME communities, digitally excluded
- Establishment of sustainable funding



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Summary



- Loneliness can affect anybody and it is everybody's business
- Loneliness affects both physical and mental health and vice versa
- Healthcare professionals are well placed to identify loneliness and act
- Health and social care systems must develop and work together
 - Clinician voices must be heard as services transform
 - Many older people are at risk of being excluded from work to reduce loneliness
- Initiatives aimed at addressing loneliness need sustainable funding



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Thank you!

Check out our position statement on
loneliness and social isolation at
www.bgs.org.uk/loneliness