

Mental Health Awareness Week

9th -15th May 2022

For Mental Health Awareness Week this year, the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) are raising awareness of the impact of loneliness on our mental health and the practical steps we can take to address it.

According to **Mind** One in four adults feel lonely some or all of the time. There's no single cause and there's no one solution. After all, we're all different! But, the longer we feel lonely, the more we are at risk of mental health problems. Some people are also at higher risk of feeling lonely than others.

Watch MHF's Youtube video on loneliness and how to take practical steps to overcome this. <https://youtu.be/XCnJ8s69LIU>

How to Cope with Loneliness and How to Improve your Mental Health

Dealing with loneliness can be difficult but there are things you can do to cope with loneliness and prevent some negative feelings and mental health problems that can come with it. Download the leaflet  .

Five Steps Towards Mental Wellbeing

- **Connect** - stay in touch regularly with the people that matter to you and spend time positively nurturing these relationships. If you don't have anyone close you can reach out to, try to connect with colleagues at work, with online communities or with people in your local area - such as your neighbours.
- **Be active** - such as taking a walk, cycling or playing a team sport. Try to find physical activities that you enjoy and make them a part of your weekly routine.
- **Keep learning** - new skills can give you a sense of achievement and help to boost your self-esteem. For example, you could sign up for a cooking course, start learning to play a musical instrument or spend time on a DIY project you've been avoiding.
- **Give to others** - even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. If you keep up the behaviour Larger acts, such as volunteering at your local community centre can also help you to build new social networks.
- **Be present** - try to be in the 'present' moment, instead of living in the past or future. Take a pause in your day and notice your feelings and thoughts, your body and the world around you. This is often referred to as "mindfulness" and it can really change the way you feel about life, how you approach challenges and the level of gratitude you feel.

Working from Home

Below are some useful tips for staff dealing with feelings of loneliness while working from home

- **Talk to your line manager** - while opening up to others can be really hard to do, having a conversation with your line manager about how lone working is impacting your wellbeing could also be useful and give you the opportunity to discuss different working arrangements that allow you more time with others.
- **Structure your day** - having a structure and routine for your day can help you keep focused, motivated, and working towards something. Try scheduling out all

your tasks for the day, making sure you book in time for regular breaks. When you have a really busy workload, it can be tempting to skip breaks, but taking a short break can help to improve productivity and creativity.

- **Change your environment** - having a change in space can help to spark creativity and productivity. You might also have more interactions with others - even small talk with people can be great for our wellbeing and bring us a sense of connection. For people working at home, mixing up your place of work can help to distinguish a boundary and balance between work and home life.

Mental Health Supports

Employee Assistance Programme (Help EAP)

Help EAP provide council staff with a confidential freephone helpline, manned by trained professionals. This service is available 24/7 and can be accessed by dialling 0800 028 5148. All calls are confidential and can help staff dealing affected by cancer.

Four Pillars of Wellbeing

The Council's intranet Four Pillars of Wellbeing has a wealth of information on mental health and mental health supports available internally, in the local community and nationally. They also lists the number of healthy working lives campaigns aimed at raising awareness and build a healthier workforce. To access this information, click [here](#) which will take you to another webpage.

Mental Wellbeing Hub

Optima Health our occupational health provider have just launched a [mental wellbeing hub](#) which is designed to allow you to take a proactive approach to mental wellbeing. It also includes a video on [Practicing mindfulness](#)

Your Mind Plan

Taking steps to look after our mental health is something we need to do continually. The NHS have created a great interactive tool called [Your Mind Plan](#) which offers further ideas you can try tailored to you.

Community Groups and Clubs

Here is a list of some of the clubs and organisations around the Lothians that you can join to help tackle feelings of loneliness:

- **Frindow** - Frindow is all about getting you connected and engaged with new people. [Find out more](#)
- **Befriending Networks** - Befriending offers supportive, reliable relationships through volunteer befrienders to people who would otherwise be socially isolated. [Find out more](#)
- **Men's Sheds Association** - Community spaces for men to connect, converse and create. They help reduce loneliness, and isolation and fun. [Find out more](#)
- **National Association of Women's Clubs** - Provide facilities for social life and opportunities for informal education within the means of all women. [Find out more](#)
- For a full list of all West Lothian local groups and communities, click [here](#)