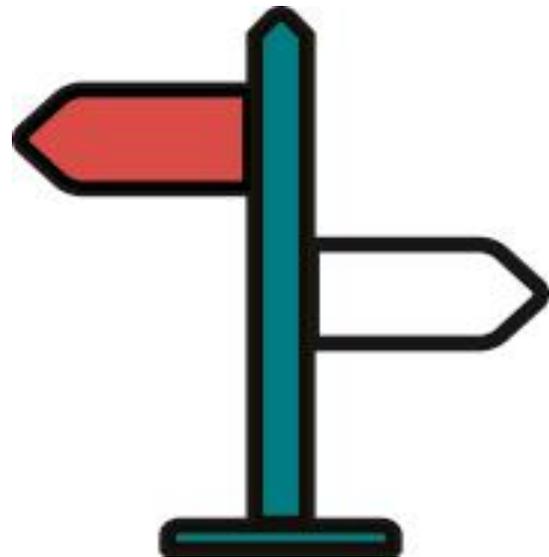


# Loneliness Factsheet

**According to the Office for National Statistics there are 2.4 million people, of all ages, who are chronically lonely in the UK.** It can be assumed that a considerable number of Freemasons, dependents and widows are included in this figure. Loneliness is associated with sleep problems, impaired cognitive health, heightened vascular resistance, hypertension, psychological stress and mental ill health.

Through regular contact almoners are able to pick up on the signs of loneliness and social isolation, and contribute to alleviating it.



## Triggers

Several studies have identified a range of factors associated with being lonely. As an almoner it is helpful to have an awareness of certain life events and understand a little more about changes in circumstances which may trigger these feelings:

- **Change or decline in social networks.** Living alone, being widowed or divorced, lack of or losing contact with friends and family can mean there are limited opportunities to participate in social occasions and meet others.
- **Location.** Structures of buildings and streets, provision of local amenities and transport, area boundaries or reputation and location of residency can cause a person to feel isolated if family or

- **Change or decline in health.** Poor health, limited mobility, social care needs or cognitive or sensory impairment can bring about feelings of isolation or loneliness.
- **Retirement or loss of employment.** Loss of social contact and enjoyment of work since retirement or loss of job. Lack of routine or feelings of worthlessness brought about by redundancy can bring about isolation and loneliness.

friends can't visit or live a long distance away.

- **Individual characteristics.** Things like age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, employment or financial status can affect personal feelings and may bring about feelings of loneliness.

## Spotting the signs

Loneliness is not always obvious to spot, but when speaking with someone there are some clues that you can look out for to help identify whether somebody is feeling lonely, such as:

- A significant change to their daily routine.
- Neglected appearance or personal hygiene.
- Feelings of worthlessness.
- Sudden loss of appetite or weight.
- Loss of a companion or friend.

## Support

If you suspect somebody you know may be dealing with loneliness you can help them through the following:

- **Patience.** Your actions may be misunderstood at first, particularly if loneliness or social isolation is a result of physical or mental health.
- **Encouragement and support.** Providing support in making new social connections or to access services designed to tackle loneliness or social isolation. For example, taking up a hobby or volunteering are positive ways to build those social connections. Volunteering opportunities are posted on [www.do-it.org](http://www.do-it.org)
- **Frequent contact.** Keeping in touch or arranging for other members of the Lodge to keep in touch e.g. telephone, video conferencing or face to face (if appropriate and adhering to social distancing guidelines).

## Getting help

As almoner there are many specialist organisations you can refer lodge members and their families to for support. The following is a selection:

- **Age UK**  
Provides advice for older people on a range of subjects including loneliness. Their befriending service can connect somebody with a volunteer who can visit or call on the phone – [www.ageuk.org.uk/services/befriending-services](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/services/befriending-services).  
Age UK also provides details of local friendship groups – [www.ageuk.org.uk/get-involved/social-groups/friendship-centres](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/get-involved/social-groups/friendship-centres)
- **Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)**  
Offers information, support and advice to almost two million people in the UK with sight loss. Its services include free telephone social groups – [www.rnib.org.uk/services-we-offer-advice-and-supportservices-talk-and-support/telephonebook-clubs](http://www.rnib.org.uk/services-we-offer-advice-and-supportservices-talk-and-support/telephonebook-clubs)
- **Independent Age**  
Offers advice, befriending, and campaigning to combat financial, social, and information poverty in older people – [www.independentage.org.uk](http://www.independentage.org.uk) or call 0800 319 6789.
- **The Silver Line**  
Operates a confidential, free helpline for older people across the UK, open every day and night of the year - [www.thesilverline.org.uk/what-we-do](http://www.thesilverline.org.uk/what-we-do) or call the helpline on 0800 4 70 80 90.
- **Carers Trust**  
Improves support, service, and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring for a loved one – [www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org). Call 0300 772 9600 or email [info@carers.org](mailto:info@carers.org)
- **Carers UK**  
Gives expert advice, information, and support to carers – [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org). Call 0808 808 7777 or email [advice@carersuk.org](mailto:advice@carersuk.org).

## Further information

- **The Masonic Charitable Foundation**

If loneliness or social isolation is linked to financial status then support may be available from the MCF. This may include help with daily living expenses, supporting children in full time education and one-off expenses. Additionally, if the situation is a result of mobility problems the MCF may be able to help by providing mobility equipment to assist with getting out and about. Contact your Metropolitan/Provincial Grand Almoner or the MCF on 0800 035 60 90 (calls are free) for more information.

MCF is currently working with Age UK on a project called 'Later Life Goals' enabling tailored support for older people going through major life transitions such as bereavement, financial hardship and reduced mobility. More information can be found here – [www.mcf.org.uk/impact-later-life](http://www.mcf.org.uk/impact-later-life)

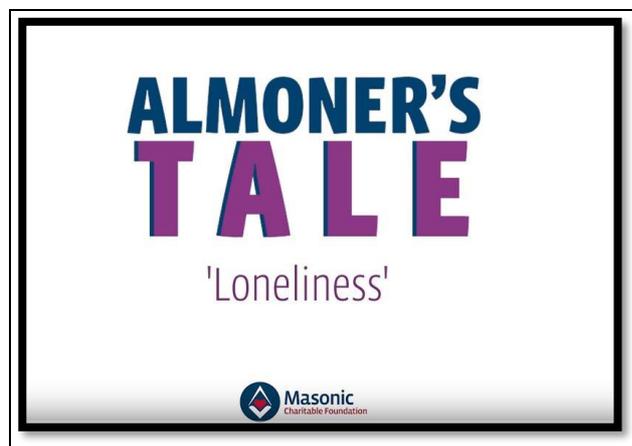
- **The MCF's Advice and Support Team**

Offer advice, guidance and support on a range of issues. Contact them by calling 0800 035 60 90 (calls are free).

- **Metropolitan/Provincial Grand Almoners**

Your MetGA/PGA may be able to signpost you to local support and assistance. In some Provinces there are Masonic clubs and groups for widows and others with shared interests. Our social groups for older people resource can be viewed here – [social groups for older people](#)

Why not watch the MCF's 'Almoner's Tale' video on loneliness - [www.mcf.org.uk/almoner](http://www.mcf.org.uk/almoner)



The information contained in this factsheet is intended for general guidance only and does not constitute advice. The organisations referred to for further help are just a sample of other support services available.