

Templates

Write a letter to your MP



End Loneliness in...

Campaign to
EndLoneliness
CONNECTIONS IN OLDER AGE

Getting support from your local MP can be a great way to gain leverage with local decision makers. This letter asks them to write a letter of support for your campaign to your health and wellbeing board. However, you could also ask them to write to your local bus company if your focus is on local transport, for example, or if you have any events going on, invite them along. This could be a great opportunity to get media coverage of the issue and your event.

Who should I send it to?

To find out the name and contact details of your local MP visit: www.theyworkforyou.com. Send the letter to their local constituency office.

Local Statistics

Do remember that it helps to strengthen your case if you use relevant local statistics. Much of this information is likely to already be available in your local Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). These will be available on your council website. You could give the council a call or do an internet search for your county name (e.g. Buckinghamshire) and the words “joint strategic needs assessment”. If not, you’ll be able to find much of it on the [Office of National Statistics website](http://www.ons.gov.uk).

Such statistics may include:

- ❓ Lone pensioner households – numbers of households with only one person, who is over pensionable age, living alone
- ❓ Number of people aged over 65 and the expected increase over the next 20-30 years
- ❓ Estimated number of chronically lonely older people in your area: multiply number of people over 65 in your area by 0.1 to reach this figure
- ❓ Number of winter deaths in population aged over 65
- ❓ Number of people living with dementia
- ❓ Fear of crime in over 65s
- ❓ Data on people (65+) who have recently lost their partners

Dear [MPs NAME]

I am writing on behalf of the End Loneliness in [YOUR AREA] campaign. We are a group of local people who have come together in our belief that nobody that wants company should be without it, and that the third age can be the best age.

There is clear evidence that loneliness and isolation in older age present a significant public health risk. Research has demonstrated it has a similar impact on early mortality as cigarette smoking, and is worse for us than obesity.¹ Lonely individuals are more prone to depression², hypertension,³ cognitive decline⁴ and dementia⁵. They are also more likely to undergo early admission into residential or nursing care.⁶ There are approximately 800,000 older people in England who are lonely all or most of the time.⁷

¹ Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB. Social relationships and mortality risk: a meta-analytic review. *PLoS Med* 2010;7(7).

² Cacioppo JT, Hughes ME, Waite LJ, Hawkley LC, Thisted RA. Loneliness as a specific risk factor for depressive symptoms: cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses. *Psychol Aging* 2006;21(1):140-51.

³ Hawkley LC, Thisted RA, Masi CM, Cacioppo JT. Loneliness predicts increased blood pressure: 5-year cross-lagged analyses in middle-aged and older adults. *Psychol Aging* 2010;25(1):132-41.

⁴ James BD, Wilson RS, Barnes LL, Bennett DA. Late-life social activity and cognitive decline in old age. *J Int Neuropsychol Soc* 2011;17(6):998-1005.

⁵ Holwerda, T. J. Deeg, D., Beekman, A. van Tilburg, T.G., Stek, M.L., Jonker, C., and Schoevers, R. 2012. Research paper: Feelings of loneliness, but not social isolation, predict dementia onset: results from the Amsterdam Study of the Elderly (AMSTEL) *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry* <http://jnnp.bmj.com/content/early/2012/11/06/jnnp-2012-302755>

⁶ Russell DW, Cutrona CE, de la Mora A, Wallace RB. Loneliness and nursing home admission among rural older adults. *Psychol Aging* 1997;12(4):574-89.

⁷ Cann P and Joplin K. The Challenge in Safeguarding the Convoy - a call to action from the Campaign to End Loneliness, Age UK Oxfordshire (2011) <http://campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk/wp->

Moreover, the proportion of people who are lonely all or most of the time has not changed in 5 decades.⁸

We know that consistently around 10% of the population over 65 feel lonely all or most of the time. This means that in [YOUR AREA], around [POPULATION OVER 65 MULTIPLIED BY 0.1] older people are chronically lonely. Currently, there are [POPULATION OVER 65] people aged over 65 in [YOUR AREA] and of these, [PERCENTAGE IN YOUR AREA] live alone. The population is projected to increase by [INPUT PERCENTAGE] in the next 30 years and as the size of our population aged over 65 grows, the problem of loneliness amongst older people is likely to grow too. [INCLUDE ANY OTHER RELEVANT DATA SUCH AS CASES OF DEMENTIA, CASES OF DEPRESSION IN OLDER PEOPLE, NUMBER OF FALLS ETC]

Changes need to take place locally if we are going to make sure that nobody who wants company is without it, including ensuring that local services shift their focus and that there is a change in society's attitude to the issue. However, most pressing, we believe that our health and wellbeing board should be taking a leadership role in tackling this issue.

Their leadership is essential if we are to avoid a sixth successive decade in which the proportion of people experiencing loneliness remains unchanged.

End Loneliness in [YOUR AREA] is calling on our health and wellbeing board to directly address the negative health impacts of loneliness in later life. First, by including a measure for loneliness in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and second, by putting in place a strategy and action plan for reducing loneliness in

content/uploads/downloads/2011/07/safeguarding-the-convey_-_a-call-to-action-from-the-campaign-to-end-loneliness.pdf

⁸ Cann P and Jopling K. The Challenge in Safeguarding the Convoy - a call to action from the Campaign to End Loneliness, Age UK Oxfordshire (2011)

http://campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/07/safeguarding-the-convey_-_a-call-to-action-from-the-campaign-to-end-loneliness.pdf

later life. The Campaign to End Loneliness has produced online guidance which provides help and support to enable our board to do this.

I am therefore writing to ask you whether you can support End Loneliness in [YOUR AREA] in our bid to ensure that loneliness is recognised as a significant health issue by the health and wellbeing board. We would be most grateful if you could highlight your concern about this issue to the board, and ask them what action they are currently taking or planning to take to ensure that this issue is included in their commissioning plans.

Yours sincerely,

[YOUR NAME] (On behalf of End Loneliness in [YOUR AREA])

ENDS