



WE NEED TO KEEP TALKING ABOUT LONELINESS

- **New initiative launched as research shows most of us have been feeling more lonely during Covid-19 pandemic than before**
 - **Loneliness in the local community concerns people most**

- 16 February 2021 NO EMBARGO-

The latest lockdown has made most people more aware of the consequences of loneliness and more determined to help face the issue, according to research by the Jo Cox Foundation.

The overwhelming majority of participants in the [Great Winter Get Together](#), a month-long campaign by the Foundation that encouraged people to face loneliness together and better understand its impact, were concerned that the ongoing pandemic would continue to cause suffering in their communities.

97% of survey participants thought loneliness would be a continuing or growing problem in their communities in the months ahead. The majority said they had been more lonely in the past few months than ever before. But four out of five said taking part in the campaign online made them feel more connected and less lonely.

This research reveals that many recognise the repercussions loneliness will have in the coming months and beyond, and that more needs to be done to continue facing the issue. The DCMS, through its #Let'sTalkLoneliness campaign, is supporting a new three-month long initiative by the Jo Cox Foundation to carry on the conversation started by their Great Winter Get Together to raise awareness and reduce the stigma around loneliness.

The #Let'sTalkLoneliness campaign, which was first launched in 2019, shares practical tips, sources of further support, and inspiring stories to break the stigma surrounding loneliness. The aim is to encourage people to reach out, seek support and take a first step towards alleviating loneliness in themselves or others.

As part of its new initiative, the Foundation is expanding its More In Common Network's 'Common Room' event series. The series brings people together from across the UK to connect and exchange ideas on how we can address loneliness and bridge divides in our communities. The next session will take place on Tuesday, 9 March during Intergenerational Week. To hear more about it, sign up to the newsletter [here](#).

The Foundation will also be launching #LonelinessLooksLike, a social media initiative and podcast series that creates a space for people to share their honest experiences of

loneliness. It shines a spotlight on the relatable human stories behind loneliness's invisible impact, reducing the stigma around recognising and talking about it on a personal level.

This new initiative will lead into the Foundation's fifth annual Great Get Together, which this year falls on the 18th – 20th June 2021. The Great Get Together will encourage people to come together and connect, building on the inspiring community support that has prevailed throughout what has been an incredibly difficult and lonely year for many.

The heightened awareness of the issue of loneliness was welcomed by Kim Leadbeater, Ambassador for the Jo Cox Foundation and Jo's sister. She said:

"It was Jo's fervent hope that, in her words, ours should never be a country where thousands of people are living lonely lives forgotten by the rest of us. It's a tragedy that on top of all the loss and suffering brought about by the virus, we have also seen a significant increase in unwanted social isolation and loneliness. But if any good has come out of this, it is that loneliness is no longer a hidden health crisis. Everybody can see around them the damage it does and it's heartening that so many people are now committed to playing their part in addressing it."

Baroness Barran, Minister for Loneliness, said:

"As we approach a year since the first lockdown, it is more important than ever that we continue to find ways to look out for one another.

"Whilst I'm encouraged that many people are finding ways of reaching new or existing communities online, the Great Winter Get Together has underlined that every single one of us has the power to make a huge collective difference. That can be picking up the phone, sending an email, writing a letter, knocking on a neighbour's door, or arranging a socially distanced walk with someone you know.

"We are proud to be working with the Jo Cox Foundation to continue raising awareness of loneliness and help reduce the stigma around it."

Key findings from the Great Winter Get Together:

- The majority of the UK population have felt more lonely during the Covid-19 pandemic than before. The majority also believe loneliness will be a continued issue.
- 97% of respondents were concerned that loneliness would be an issue in their communities in the coming months and 98% said increased levels of loneliness will be an ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3.5 million people took part in the Great Winter Get Together, the majority whom said it made them feel less lonely and raised their awareness of loneliness.

SURVEY DETAILS:

An online representative sample of the UK public were surveyed between Wednesday 20th January and Thursday, 21st January 2021, by Portland Communications. 1,009 UK adults (aged 18+) were interviewed online. The data is nationally representative sample across age (18+), gender and macro region (NUTS 1) through quota targets and weighting.

ENDS

For more information please contact: media@jocoxfoundation.org

The Great Winter Get Together:

The 2020 Great Winter Get Together, which ran from 14 December 2020 – 18 January 2021, is an initiative of the Jo Cox Foundation. 2020 was the 4th time the country has come together during the festive period to raise awareness of loneliness and social isolation. Inspired by Jo Cox's desire to 'turbo charge the public's awareness of loneliness', this year we asked people to join us in facing loneliness, one connection at a time. It also saw us working with partners including the Marmalade Trust, the Mental Health Collective, Leonard Cheshire and Together TV. The campaign culminated in a Festival of Connection on Blue Monday (18 January) in partnership with SocialEyes. To find out more, visit: www.greatgettogether.org

The Jo Cox Foundation:

Jo was murdered on the 16th June 2016 in the place she loved – Batley and Spen – doing the work she loved, as an MP on behalf of her constituents. The Jo Cox Foundation was established to support Jo's friends, family and colleagues in their efforts to continue her work and to highlight the issues she cared about so deeply. Led by her example, we are restless for change. Just as she did, we believe in working together with individuals and organisations which share our commitment to a fairer, kinder more tolerant world. www.jocoxfoundation.org

Spirit of 2012:

The Great Winter Get Together forms part of the *Moment to Movement* project, supported by Spirit of 2012. *Moment to Movement* transforms the Great Get Together from a series of annual events to a year-round movement to inspire social connection and community action. Spirit of 2012 is the London 2012 Games social legacy funder, which proudly invests in projects that build sustainable social connections from participation in events and develops our understanding of what works in creating happier people and happier places. www.spiritof2012.org.uk

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sports:

Over the last three years, the UK Government has been leading the way on tackling loneliness:

- It created the world's first Minister for Loneliness and published the world's first Government loneliness strategy in October 2018, containing 60 commitments from nine Government departments. Implementation of the strategy is ongoing and the Government published a first annual report in January 2020 setting out our progress;
- It launched the first Government fund dedicated to reducing loneliness worth £11.5 million, which is supporting 126 projects to transform the lives of thousands of lonely people across England;
- It launched the inaugural #LetsTalkLoneliness campaign in June 2019 to help raise awareness and tackle stigma.