

# SMC SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

APRIL 2022



ST MARY'S  
COLLEGE

## LONELINESS

Every year the Mental Health Foundation organises and sets the theme for Mental Health Awareness Week in May. They encourage individuals, schools, communities, and organisations to get involved.



**This year's theme is loneliness.**

### What do we mean by loneliness?

Loneliness is often described as when we feel we do not have the meaningful relationships we want around us. It is something we can all experience from time-to-time, throughout our lives, and will be different for everyone.

Although loneliness is something that we will all likely experience, some people may be more likely to feel lonely. This may be due to the circumstances and experiences they face which make it more difficult to put things in place that help reduce feelings of loneliness.

### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

Though loneliness and social isolation are terms that are often related and used interchangeably, they do not mean the same thing.

**Social isolation refers to a lack of social contacts, which can be measured by the size of a social network or through the number of relationships a person has.**

The difference between loneliness and social isolation is the difference between feeling alone and being alone. A person who is socially isolated does not necessarily feel lonely.

#### Transient loneliness

Transient, or short-term, loneliness can vary in length, and be caused by certain situations or events. For example, a change in a relationship. Transient loneliness is often eased through improvements in the situational cause.

#### Chronic loneliness

If loneliness continues to be a long-term experience, affecting daily life, then this could be considered chronic loneliness. If we are constantly feeling lonely, this can lead to poor mental health.



### A YouGov poll (2020) of 13-19-year-olds found:

**69%**

said they felt alone "often" or "sometimes" in the last fortnight



**59%**

feel like they "often" or "sometimes" have no-one to talk to

[safeguarding@smchull.org](mailto:safeguarding@smchull.org)

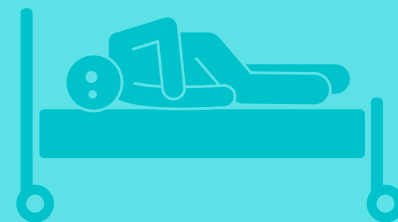
# How can loneliness affect our mental health?

Mental health is made up of our thoughts, feelings, mood, and behaviour. We all have mental health, just like we all have physical health. Although loneliness is not a mental health problem, it is an experience that can affect our mental health.



## Chronic loneliness can lead to an increased risk of:

- Low mood
- Low self-esteem
- Poor sleep
- Increased anxiety
- Increased stress



Loneliness can be experienced during times of change. Young people often go through many changes during their time at school. For example, transitioning from primary to secondary school, shifting friendships, and going through puberty. Sometimes, if young people are already experiencing poor mental health, there is an increased risk of feeling lonely. This can often be related to feeling stigmatised, and misunderstood, which can make it difficult for young people to open up or reach out to others.



## Spotting the signs of loneliness in pupils:

### Social withdrawal

Are they as sociable as they normally would be?  
Spending time alone in a way that is out-of-character can be an indicator of social withdrawal. Young people who are experiencing loneliness may begin to find social connection an anxiety-provoking experience.

### Trouble sleeping

Has their attention in class changed?  
Pupils experiencing loneliness are likely to have increased levels of stress and difficulty sleeping. Keep an eye out for pupils that are frequently coming to school tired or struggling to stay awake in class.

### Low self-esteem or a loss of confidence

Has their engagement with school life changed? When experiencing loneliness, we may not feel our most comfortable selves. This may lead to struggles with our sense of self, causing low self-esteem. Keep an eye out for pupils that have withdrawn from speaking in class, or who are struggling to keep on top of their studies.

### Feeling frustrated

Has the way they react to class work, peers and staff changed? Loneliness is not a comfortable experience, and it can feel really frustrating at times. If your pupils are struggling with patience and getting frustrated easily, this may be an indicator that there are other feelings going on.

## Supporting pupils to understand, accept and express their feelings

- Create safe, confidential spaces for pupils to explore how they are feeling
- Offer regular in-touch points with pupils, to see how they are feeling
- Model healthy behaviours
- Be mindful that behind every behaviour is a feeling



## Mental Health Awareness

### Week

9th-15th May 2022



## KEY MESSAGES

- Lanyards must be worn at all times.
- Please sign in and out of school on the Inventory system screen.





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**smc**  
ST MARY'S SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

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Safeguarding Officer Mrs S Appleyard	Safeguarding Officer Miss R Clixby	Safeguarding Officer Mrs A Antcliff	SM6 Safeguarding Lead Mrs R Lenham	SM6 Safeguarding Assistant Miss M Routh
				