



Lifelink Workwell

Employees facing loneliness:

A guide for employers





Early support matters

Loneliness is one of the most common and most overlooked wellbeing challenges affecting employees today. It isn't simply about being alone. Loneliness is the feeling of being disconnected, unsupported, or unseen, even in a busy workplace. It can affect anyone, regardless of seniority, confidence, or how sociable they appear. It's important to introduce counselling and wellbeing support such as wellbeing cafés, short workshops, or peer support groups early, and not as a last resort as they are one of the most effective support resources for employees who feel isolated. In the UK, almost **half of all adults (49.63%) reported feeling lonely at least occasionally***, and **1 in 10 workers feel lonely at work often or always***.

- Helps employees build confidence and resilience.
 - Reduces the likelihood that loneliness will escalate into more significant mental health issues.
 - Provides a safe, confidential space to talk through both workplace and personal challenges.
 - Normalises help-seeking behaviour across the organisation.
- For employers, loneliness matters. It influences employee mental health, which impacts productivity, engagement, and staff retention. Employees who feel isolated are more likely to experience stress, disengagement, and burnout, and may find it harder to collaborate, communicate, or feel a valuable part of the organisation. Importantly, loneliness may not originate from work. Many employees' experience loneliness in their personal lives. This could be for reasons, such as bereavement, relationship breakdown, moving to a new area, caring responsibilities, mental health challenges, or social isolation. This naturally impacts how connected, confident, and supported they feel at work. Employers play a crucial role in buffering these experiences by creating supportive, understanding environments where people feel they belong.

The good news? Loneliness is highly preventable.

Early support matters

It's important to introduce counselling and wellbeing support such as wellbeing cafés, short workshops, or peer support groups early, and not as a last resort as they are one of the most effective support resources for employees who feel isolated. Early access to professional support:

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 - Provides a safe, confidential space to talk through both workplace and personal challenges.
 - Normalises help-seeking behaviour across the organisation.
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Understanding loneliness at work

Loneliness isn't caused by a lack of people around you, but rather, it's caused by a lack of meaningful connection. Someone may be surrounded by colleagues yet still feel unsupported or excluded. Likewise, remote and hybrid workers may feel physically distant from their teams but deeply connected if the culture supports belonging.

Research shows **certain groups are more likely to experience loneliness, including 16–24 year olds, women, people who are single or widowed, and those living with mental health difficulties***. Understanding this helps managers adopt a more compassionate, proactive approach.

Employees often describe loneliness as:

- Feeling disconnected.
- Believing they have no one to confide in.
- Feeling "out of the loop".
- Feeling overlooked, invisible, or uncertain about their place.
- Struggling to build meaningful relationships.

Why loneliness happens at work

Loneliness has many possible causes. Some relate to workplace culture, some to team dynamics, and others to personal circumstances. Common factors include:

- Working remotely or in isolation without strong connection points.
- Joining a team without opportunities to build relationships.
- Feeling excluded from networks or decision-making.
- Experiencing a role change or re-structure.
- Feeling different from the majority culture of the team (identity, background, neurodiversity, communication style etc).
- Being under significant pressure without emotional support.
- Navigating a challenging life event.
- Working in high-demand or emotionally intensive roles.

Personal pressures matter here too. For example, **62% of lonely young people say loneliness makes them lose confidence in themselves***. This is something that will inevitably affect how they work.





Recognising loneliness in employees

Loneliness is often hidden. Managers may notice early signs such as:

- Reduced participation in discussions.
- Becoming quieter, more withdrawn.
- Switching cameras off in virtual meetings.
- Avoiding informal conversations/social plans.
- Showing increased self-doubt.
- Changes in mood, confidence, or communication.

These signs are subtle, which is why supportive check-ins and conversation in which an employee feels they can be honest without fear of judgement, dismissal, or negative consequences matter.

Why tackling loneliness matters for organisations

Employees who feel connected perform better. Loneliness, meanwhile, can affect:

- Productivity and concentration
- Team cohesion
- Confidence and decision-making
- Absence and presenteeism
- Staff turnover and retention

The health impacts are substantial too: **loneliness can increase the risk of early mortality by 26%* and is strongly linked to poorer mental health, including depression***.





What employers can do to reduce loneliness

Creating a connected workplace doesn't require grand initiatives. Simple, relational, and consistency make the biggest difference.

Build a culture of meaningful check-ins: Regular, human-centred conversations help leaders understand how employees are feeling. These conversations should be beyond that task and feel personal as well as practical. They can be as simple as space to ask, "How are you doing?", "How can I help?".

Strengthen connection points for hybrid and remote staff: Ensure remote colleagues are included in discussions, celebrations, decisions, and leadership visibility. Small, intentional moments of inclusion build belonging.

Communication is clear and inclusive: Employees feel more connected when they understand what's happening in the organisation. Transparent communication reduces uncertainty and prevents people from feeling left out or un-informed.

Equip managers to support connection: Managers are central to workplace culture. Providing time, guidance, reflective space, and confidence in having wellbeing conversations strengthens the entire team.

Make support visible, accessible, and normalised: Sign-posting counselling, wellbeing resources (such as monthly wellbeing lunches or short training sessions) and any internal support networks encourages employees to seek help early and reduce stigma.

Addressing loneliness is not about increasing social events or forcing interaction. It's about building a culture of connection, communication, and where people feel comfortable being honest. When employers prioritise these foundations, people feel seen, valued, and part of something meaningful, strengthening wellbeing, collaboration, and long-term organisational resilience.

*Campaign to End Loneliness - Facts and Statistics





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