



pub is the hub



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# Creating Connections

Tips on how publicans can reach out and promote connection within their communities



# Call Last Orders for Loneliness

Helping others to 'Join Inn', as a publican or local volunteer, is commonly acknowledged to be rewarding whether you are involved in the giving or receiving of support. Here are a few examples of why publicans are reaching out to help tackle loneliness in their communities with the help of others...

*"The MeetUpMondays group is always so friendly, welcoming and interesting with the different activities. I didn't go into pubs on my own before MeetUpMondays but I do now. I have made friends that I now see outside this group too. It is brilliant and has given me a spring in my step."*

Margaret, an attendee of the group at Young's pub The Alexandra in London's Wimbledon

*"Volunteering is really rewarding and a good way of getting you involved in your community. I think the chats volunteers have with the people we deliver meals to are as good for us as they are for them."*

Russell Harkin, a meals on wheels delivery volunteer in Sussex

*"Most of our volunteers do it for the social aspect, enjoying the opportunity to chat and connect with other people. Many of the volunteers who helped to refurbish the pub before we opened developed friendships through it and their involvement in the pub makes people want to go there and support the pub too."*

Bill Pearson, treasurer of community owned The Shrewsbury Arms, Kingstone, Staffordshire

*"I'm retired, live on my own and moved to a new area, so volunteering at the pub has been a great way to meet others. I started last October and after the first lockdown volunteering gave me a positive focus to get out and about. I really enjoy meeting and interacting with lots of different people through the pub and it has made me feel less lonely."*

Julie Jenner, a shop and bar volunteer at The Ploughshare at Beeston, Norfolk

*"Things like our 'MeetUpMondays' say to people this is a friendly pub, and we care about others. People make a value judgement on the things you promote and get a feel for the business. Consumers like using feel-good businesses."*

Mick Dore, landlord of The Alexandra in Wimbledon, London

*"Connections enable us to get people here. We have linked with the local community worker and social care and make connections with local community groups to let them know we exist and what we do."*

Helen Jones, manager of The Bevy, Brighton

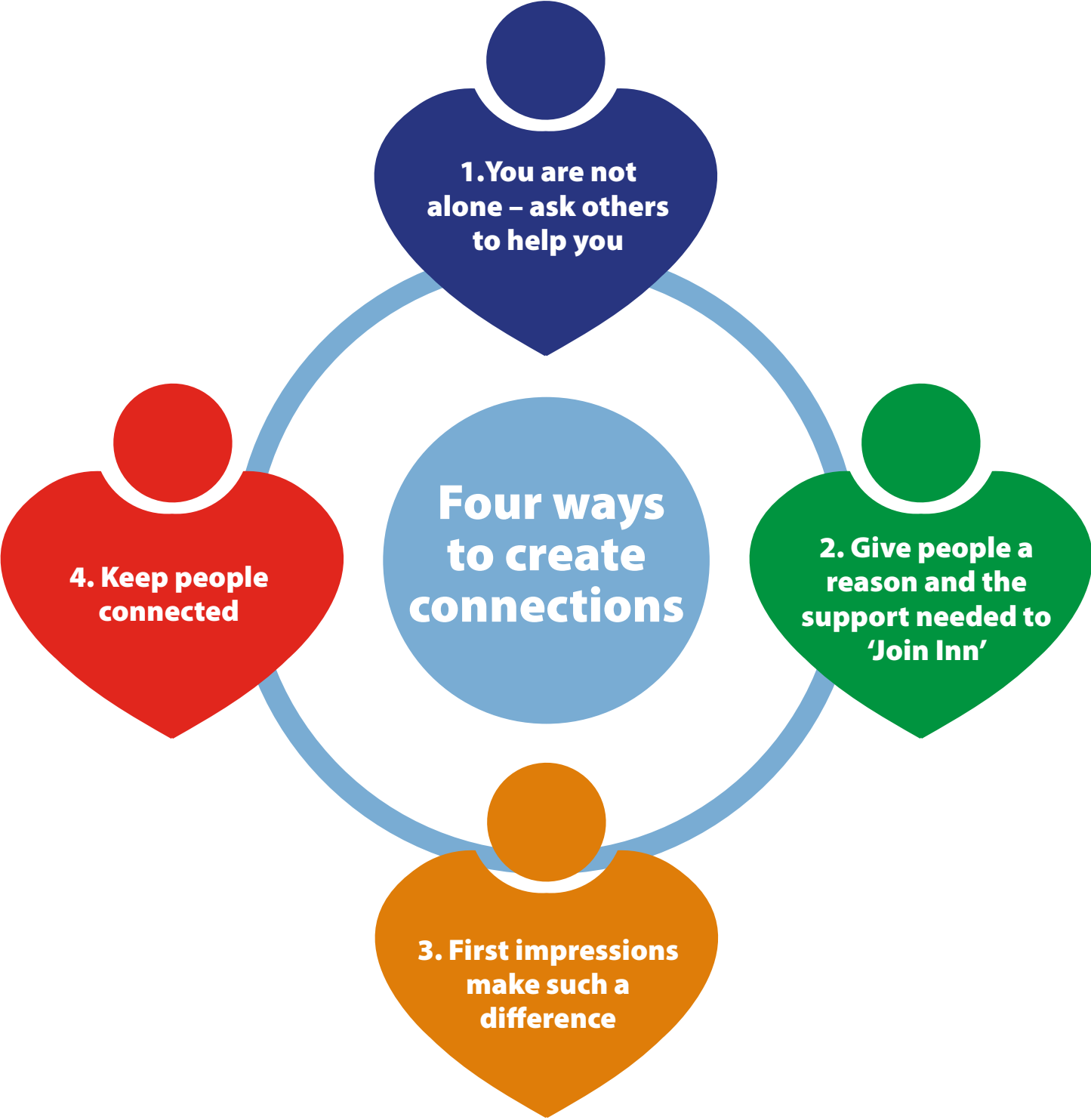
*"I blush when people praise me for helping support others and I just say to people I don't need any thanks, just make sure you support the pub."*

Vanda Pera, publican of The Crown Inn at Capel, Surrey, (Star Pubs & Bars)

*"One year I received a call from a daughter who wanted to help her mother meet new people at the pub's Christmas lunch after the death of her father. I had a table of ladies, who had known each other for a long time but are the craziest and funniest people you have ever met. I made a space for her on that table. The best thing to come out of that day was that they had given her their phone number and they were going to catch up in the New Year."*

Kate Hayden, publican of The Snow Goose in Farnborough (Star Pubs & Bars)

# How to create connections





Step 1. Joined up action: who can you ask to help bring people together in your local community

✓ The Connect Four Challenge: Join forces to help tackle loneliness

Our 'Join Inn - Last Orders for Loneliness' Connect Four Good asks publicans to engage and work with individuals, groups and organisations who can help identify and connect people at risk of isolation and feelings of loneliness.

Working together with local partners helps to bring people together, in their community, through activities and organisations that can help improve their quality of life by more meaningful social interactions on a regular basis.

Set up an informal 'community connector' group, bringing together people/organisations who may already be trying to tackle loneliness in your community or just come in to contact with individuals who they know would love to meet up with others around hobbies, interests or grass roots sports. Examples include:

- Charities and volunteering groups, maybe connected through faith groups or a village hall.
- Other local business people like estate agents, hairdressers, newsagents, betting shop managers, gardeners and taxi drivers.
- Your local GP/health practitioners and visitors.
- Educational links, such as head teachers, playgroups, nursery managers and groups offering skills initiatives.



The Bevy, Brighton

- Support service agencies such as meals on wheels providers or domiciliary care agencies.
- Other groups addressing societal loneliness - especially amongst the young who are often forgotten.

**Discover some useful groups here:**  
[www.pubisthehub.org.uk/join-inn-last-orders-for-loneliness/helping-make-connections](http://www.pubisthehub.org.uk/join-inn-last-orders-for-loneliness/helping-make-connections)



Step 2. Give people a reason, and the support needed, to 'Join Inn' events and activities and be part of their community

There are many different reasons why specific groups of people may long for more social interaction and companionship, especially following the Covid-19 restrictions. These may include:

- Working or studying from home and missing the after-work/study drink and social interaction.
- Young parents feeling out of their depth and alone without their family support network.
- People who have been on furlough, recently made redundant or recently out of education.
- Those recently bereaved or caring for someone isolating at home.
- People who may have recently moved into the area.

**How can you create events or activities that help people come together, give them a purpose in life or just helping them to feel human again?**

Through a few simple actions and behavioural changes by publicans, like connecting with local organisations to host activities and events at their pub, it can encourage and enable people to join in and meet new people, making a big difference to their lives.

Through shared interests, conversation and a little help many people can form new friendships that have a transformational impact in improving their health and wellbeing.

Many publicans already work with organisers of groups and activities to broaden the type and frequency of activities and events at their pub. These groups/organisations can attract new, as well as existing customers, around shared interests or local community actions.

These partnerships and groups help give people a reason, and the support needed, to come along to events and activities and feel part of their community.

Targeting people in similar circumstances, with shared interests and hobbies helps connect individuals, even when they don't know each other.



Whether it's having a chat at a coffee morning, playing games, doing sport or exercise together, volunteering, or charitable work these all offer an opportunity for young and old to come together and connect which helps to reduce societal loneliness.



Offer opportunities to connect

Suggested event and activity ideas

- Social interaction and conversation opportunities through community cafés, coffee mornings (such as a MeetUpMondays group) or a regular Bacon Butty club, lunch and bingo club, afternoon tea group or supper or gin club.
- ‘Lunch hour’ walks with a sandwich and drink, breakfast or afterwork networking events.
- Parent and baby/toddler groups, such as comedy sessions, inviting older, experienced mums/dads to help first timers.
- Book, art, games, poetry, baking or skills groups, such as digital or craft skills. Is there potential to host a Men’s/ Women’s Shed or a Repair Shop?
- Sports activities, clubs and screenings - such as pool, darts or Shuffleboard clubs, forming a pub cricket or walking football team or putting on events such as a Wimbledon final cream tea.
- Gardening/allotment group, maybe linked with community foodbanks or workshops. Consider initiatives such as running groups who stop at your pub or public spaces in your local area to do gardening as part of their run.
- New to the area nights - offer a table where people who have moved to the area can come along and meet others in the same situation.
- Singing groups - encourage a community choir to practice or regularly perform at the pub. Community carol singing events are also another great way of bringing people of all ages across your community together.



**“People who come into the pub to attend groups, also often end up using it for drinks or meals at other times or tell other people about the pub, so it helps attract new customers.”**

**Vanda Pera, publican of Star Pubs & Bars’ The Crown Inn at Capel, Surrey**

- Intergenerational events/activities aimed at bringing young and old together to share skills and spend time together, such as a bake-off competition, board games afternoon, a planting project, keeping community chickens or a ‘Bring Your Gran for a Can’ event.
- Environmental or community events starting and finishing at the pub - such as litter picks, beach cleans, park runs or walks involving scavenger and treasure hunts.
- ‘Community’ moments - get people involved in helping organise or contribute to community events such as festivals, a festive light-up your neighbourhood initiative, national celebrations or projects around maintaining traditions. Ideas include a window wonderland trail around your area, making community bunting for a festival or a themed community photo exhibition.
- Dog owner events, perhaps involving your local vet, with activities such as a monthly walk and doggy brunch at your pub or an annual fun dog show.
- Fundraising events, such as a Macmillan or Dementia UK coffee morning or activities for Red Nose Day, Children in Need, Christmas Jumper Day or activities for local charities and community projects.
- Ask people what they would like and give them permission to use your pub as a community hub.

Outdoor activities

As we come out of lockdowns some people may still want to enjoy sitting outside, especially with outside lights, blankets and heating. So don’t forget to replicate what you might do indoors, outdoors as this is a great opportunity to get potential non pub people to see and experience your offer.



**“I was taken by the power that savouring a simple cup of coffee can have to connect people and create community.”**

**Howard Schultz, Starbucks founder**



## Ask others to 'Connect Four Good'

Raise awareness with your existing customers asking them to reach out to others to encourage them along to the events/activities your pub puts on or hosts.

Everyone probably knows someone who might benefit from more social interaction with others – young, old, married, separated, bereaved – when it comes to feeling lonely or isolated this isn't just the preserve of the elderly. It's about everyday acts of kindness that help make a difference to someone's life by giving them the opportunity to connect with others and make lasting friendships on their doorstep.

To help you do this please use Pub is The Hub's free downloadable A3 poster on our website at: [www.pubisthehub.org.uk/join-inn-last-orders-for-loneliness](http://www.pubisthehub.org.uk/join-inn-last-orders-for-loneliness).



Encourage customers to bring someone along to a group or event the first time, or to find someone who could help do this, as it will help the person coming along feel more comfortable and confident.



## Helping others, helping you

Most of us experienced some form of isolation or loneliness during the Covid-19 lockdowns and that includes publicans. This is an opportunity for you to reach out as well and reconnect and re-establish relationships that need reigniting. Helping feels good!

*"It makes me feel good when I lay in bed at night that I have helped make a difference to someone's day. Just little things can have such a big impact on someone who is feeling lonely or sad."*

Sharon Herron, publican at Stonegate Pub Partners' The Keel Row, in Seaton Delaval, Northumberland



✓ Hunt out lesser-known events to bring people together at quieter trading sessions

Here are just a few that can be used to create a community get-together and reach out to a wider audience.

- **Small Charities Week**  
[www.smallcharityweek.com](http://www.smallcharityweek.com)
- **International Friendship Day**
- **National Afternoon Tea Week**  
[www.afternoontea.co.uk](http://www.afternoontea.co.uk)
- **National Allotments Week**  
[www.nsalg.org.uk](http://www.nsalg.org.uk)
- **Macmillan 'World's Biggest Coffee Morning'**  
[www.coffee.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.coffee.macmillan.org.uk)
- **National Neighbour Day**
- **National Roast Dinner Day**
- **Loneliest Day of the Year for Parents**
- **National Intergenerational Week**  
[www.generationsworkingtogether.org](http://www.generationsworkingtogether.org)
- **National Walking Day**
- **Together Coalition**  
[www.together.org.uk](http://www.together.org.uk) - keep an eye on their website for lovely activities to help bring communities together, such as its #BillionSeedChallenge
- **National Bingo Day**  
[www.nationalbingoday.co.uk](http://www.nationalbingoday.co.uk)
- **National Sewing Month**
- **National Board Games Day**



*"In a world of algorithms, hash tags and followers, know the true importance of human connection."*

Simi Fromen, writer



### Step 3. Open Arms - first impressions make such a difference

We can all relate to an event or experience that made us feel anxious, awkward or excluded, where we just wanted to go home. Imagine these powerful emotions in someone wary of social situations entering your pub on their own. Remember, first impressions are so important.

Think about how you create the right atmosphere, with well briefed colleagues so individuals feel welcome, are put at ease and become more confidence over a period of time to come back and enjoy regular and meaningful social interactions.

**Tips include:**

- Ideally through your community connector group, get buddies to bring and introduce less confident individuals to events, activities and groups.
- Start small, so individuals don't become overwhelmed when first attending an event or activity. Always have a host/designated team member who can welcome and engage new people, introducing them to like-minded people and looking after them.
- Simple things like an open door and clear external signage for events helps reduce anxiety, guiding people to the right place where they can be met, welcomed, and settled in.
- Clear communication about table service, location of toilets and other essential information, such as transport home again, avoids feelings of anxiety or worry over the unknown.
- Does your space accommodate people on their own, especially if you would rather, they don't sit at the bar blocking the server. A morning paper, plugs for laptops, or a daily quiz sheet can all be a reason for someone on their own to get out and enjoy the social space of your pub for a few hours.
- Community café with their own entrance can really help non pub people, both young and old, feel comfortable about coming to meet others over coffee and cake.
- As we come out of lockdown don't forget to replicate what you might do indoors, outdoors as this is a great opportunity to get potential non pub people to experience your offer.
- Volunteering is a great way of people connecting with others too. Encourage people to volunteer to help support services, such as meals on wheels or lunch clubs, or activities offered at your pub.
- Oh, and NEVER tag an event as a 'loneliness' event. For many this would be a badge of shame or pity. It's just about creating opportunities for people to get together whatever your reason.



### Step 4. Keep people connected

What is so important in tackling societal loneliness is the quality of the connections we make, not the number.

A one-off event is great at breaking the ice, but they have to lead to meaningful and regular social interactions to improve peoples' wellbeing and long-term outlook on life.

✓ **How do you make sure people know what is going on and that they are welcome?**

- Different people will use different mediums to find out 'what's on' - noticeboards, pub Facebook sites, WhatsApp groups, posters in local shops, flyers through the door, GPs surgery, parish magazines – think about your audience and how you stay connected with them on a regular basis.



- Establish a community connector group where local people and customers help to connect with neighbours and residents who might need transport, moral support or just a friend to help get them out.

✓ **Think about simple prompts in your pub to help make connections and build relationships**

- Community tables, especially linked into initiatives like 'MeetUpMondays' or Chatty Café schemes.
- Does the layout of your tables help spontaneous conversations and friendships? For example, putting tables of one together or near to chatty customers. Feature larger sharing tables with Join Me cards, create board game nights and mixed quiz teams.
- Remember though that some people are simply happy being on their own in a social space, so never force unwanted interactions.



If this guide helps raise awareness of how we can all do something, no matter how small, to help the 'Join Inn - Last Orders for Loneliness' campaign we have made a difference. As we come through and adjust to the immense challenges from the Covid-19 pandemic it's never been more important to reconnect people feeling isolated, lonely and disconnected. Walking past a busy pub where friends and family are catching up is incredibly painful if you are on your own and just want to experience some good old hospitality with someone down the pub.

For more information on the 'Join Inn' campaign visit [www.pubisthehub.org.uk/join-inn-last-orders-for-loneliness](http://www.pubisthehub.org.uk/join-inn-last-orders-for-loneliness)

***"The most important thing in life are the connections you make with others."***

Tom Ford, designer

***"Feeling connected to each other is a basic human need."***

Anon

***"Loneliness has no mercy. It takes who it takes. People can be introvert or the bubbliest of people. Loneliness is in all places. I find loneliness in the darkest, most obscure places and it is never in the most obvious places."***

Kate Hayden, publican of The Snow Goose in Hampshire



**pub is the hub**

Regional Agricultural Centre  
Yorkshire Showground, Railway Road  
Harrogate, HG2 8NZ

**T:** 01423 546165

**W:** [pubisthehub.org.uk](http://pubisthehub.org.uk)

**TW:** @PubistheHub\_uk

**Facebook.com/pubisthehub**