



pub is the hub



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A Guide for Publicans

Make a difference to someone's day and help tackle loneliness in your community



Photo by Rebecca Cresta



Introduction

Pubs, and the people who run them, have always been at the heart of communities, both urban and rural, creating places for sociability and companionship. However, there are still over nine million lonely people in the UK, lacking the connections in life that matter to us as human beings.

That is why we want you to 'Join Inn' with Pub is The Hub to help tackle the causes of loneliness, creating more connected, friendlier, and stronger communities where the pub is the hub.

This *Join Inn – Last Orders for Loneliness* guide looks to:

- **raise awareness** of increasing societal loneliness within the UK, and the role publicans and their pubs can play in improving quality-of-life within their communities.
- **build sustainable partnerships** with others engaged in the loneliness debate, enabling more publicans to 'Join Inn' and help their communities.
- **recognise the social value of publicans** already making a difference and help others become 'Join Inn Community Connectors' with practical help and support to address local needs with local solutions.

We don't have all the answers but we have inspiration from great publicans, ideas and helpful tips on our website at:

www.pubisthehub.org.uk/join-inn-last-orders-for-loneliness

So, keep in touch by emailing **enquiries@pubisthehub.org.uk** and read about some of the initiatives that publicans and their local communities are doing to make a difference to peoples' lives.

Our guide has three sections.

1. Understanding loneliness and its impact on people.
2. What can we do in our communities?
3. What can you do in your pub?

Ultimately, our aim is to make a difference to someone's day through small acts of kindness that, over time, help reduce loneliness within the communities we serve.



“Lonely is not being alone, it’s the feeling that no one cares.”

Anon





1. Understanding loneliness and its impact on people.

Firstly, it is important to recognise that loneliness is not the same as being alone, nor is it just the preserve of the elderly, although older people are still more likely to suffer chronic loneliness than younger people.

In 2018, the BBC undertook an on-line survey called the 'Loneliness Experiment'. Psychologists from three British universities highlighted several findings from the data collected and concluded that:

1. Young people are the group who feel loneliest
2. People who feel discriminated against are more likely to feel lonely
3. A third of people often or very often feel lonely
4. People feel ashamed about feeling lonely
5. People who feel lonely have on average lower levels of trust in others
6. People who feel lonely have more online-only friends
7. People who say they often feel lonely report poorer health

Loneliness and social isolation are different but related concepts. Social isolation can lead to loneliness and loneliness can lead to social isolation. Both may also occur at the same time. People often describe loneliness as having no one to talk to; feeling disconnected from the world; feeling left out; sadness and feeling misunderstood.

For some people it may be an event that triggers feelings of loneliness, for others it is their individual circumstances. Loneliness has many different faces and causes:

- **Emotional loneliness** associated for example with a bereavement, a relationship break-up which results in the loss of a close confidante or intimate partner.
- **Relational or social loneliness** often triggered by retiring, changing jobs, leaving school, or starting university, where established social networks through work colleagues or college friendships may be suddenly severed
- **Collective loneliness** where someone just longs for a group or community of people to share common activities and interests.

As a publican it's important to recognise that just bringing people together to address social isolation and increase the number of social contacts is not an end in itself – to combat loneliness, it is the quality and sustainability of the relationships created that is most important.



2. What can we do in our individual communities?

“The only way to have a friend is to be one”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

During the COVID-19 pandemic, publicans across the UK have shown incredible communal ingenuity and social responsibility. Overnight, publicans have diversified to meet the needs of their local community, reaching out the hand of friendship with small acts of kindness. Pubs have become the hub where residents have come together and joined in to build friendlier and stronger communities. How do we make sure this momentum continues?

Here are three simple acts that might make a difference to someone's day.

1. Start a conversation and listen with your eyes.

People who feel lonely can often feel invisible to others. So, don't just say hello when you pass someone in your community, stop and have a conversation. Give that person your complete attention, watch their face and listen to what they are saying, asking questions with curiosity and interest. This will make them feel valued, establish trust, and over time build a meaningful and sustainable relationship that will help connect them with others.

Ensure your team also understand it's ok to take 5 minutes out during certain times of the day to engage in social chats with customers, helping them feel connected and valued within their community. The art of listening and conversation is a skill you may need to teach them.

2. Surprise someone with a small act of kindness

When someone feels lonely there is a natural tendency to withdraw, and over time, this vicious cycle of feeling insignificant drives them away from the very relationships

they need most. A meet up poster in the pub window does not always make your pub accessible to those who would most benefit from attending.

Your role, therefore, as a trusted community figure, is to help give people the confidence and opportunity to join in, meeting people in similar circumstances, around shared interests, or activities. A small act of kindness like inviting someone to a seasonal event, friendship circle or weekly activity is vital to helping them build a social network where the pub can become a social hub for people previously isolated and/or lonely.

There are great examples of publicans across the country who started small, inviting residents to a Christmas meal, which eventually inspired monthly lunches, activities, and friendship groups. Heineken established Brewing Good Cheer in 2019 and together with publicans from Star Pubs & Bars held over 100 charitable group lunches for people around the UK who might not otherwise have got the chance to go to their local and meet new people.

Visit www.neighbourly.com to find out more.

3. Reach out to other agencies and charities

There are so many organisations that work directly with those at risk of loneliness, and the many known health issues associated with it. These agencies open the potential for meaningful collaboration between publicans, community groups and charities, where a pub or becomes a trusted hub for people to meet and rebuild social connections.

Google your local area for potential partners involved in tackling loneliness. Alternatively, we have provided a list on our website of some national organisations and charities who may have local groups you can connect with.





Community Collaboration to Fight Loneliness: Case study: Frome, Somerset

Here is just one example of how one community collaborated to make a difference. In 2013, the Somerset town of Frome began a pioneering project building a network of 'community connectors' (www.telegraph.co.uk/family/relationships/can-learn-town-cured-loneliness)

How could you replicate some of what they did, elevating your pub into a community hub and becoming an influential 'community connector'?

- ✓ A few influential members of the community came together to start joining up community support around health, well-being, and loneliness. *Why not start the conversation in your community?*
- ✓ The group compiled a list of all the social clubs and support groups within their community into one online directory that could be easily accessed by everyone. *This could be notice board outside your pub or a laptop or tablet with pub WiFi. Alternatively, posters and flyers are still a great way of contacting people who may not have access to the internet.*
- ✓ They also helped to start more clubs to meet some of the specific needs of the area – Talking Café, a Tech Shed, Nifty Needles craft club, Men's and Women's Shed. *Some of these ideas have already been supported elsewhere across the UK through Pub is The Hub.*
- ✓ Local volunteers of all backgrounds and trades – hairdressers, local tradespeople, hospitality staff – became 'community connectors' helping to share with their customers and neighbours information about what was going on in the community to help connect people by word of mouth. The whole community got involved generating 14,000 conversations in a town of 28,000 people. *Why not get some of your locals involved in spreading the word around clubs and activities within your pub?*
- ✓ You can read more about this initiative in Frome here: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/feb/21/town-cure-illness-community-frome-somerset-isolation

3. What can you do in your individual pub?

The role of the publican and their team has always been at the heart of community pubs, creating a place of belonging and friendship where people meet and build strong social bonds. In recent years 'community pub' has become recognised as a term to describe venues that play an important social role in a local area, and in the process, help tackle isolation and loneliness.

So, what is it that elevates a pub into a community asset with real social value to its residents?

We believe it is the publican. They recognise the importance of **social responsibility** as a figurehead and role model within the community. They also have a philosophy and three common attributes that appear to single them out.

1. They make sure their premises are **accessible** to everyone in the area and see their pub as a **community space**, breaking down the physical, cultural, and social barriers that may prevent some people from joining in.
2. They are **proactive** in creating opportunities for residents to come together around a variety of shared activities and events. Their pub is not just somewhere to eat and drink but a **community hub** where people of all ages meet for lots of different reasons.
3. They understand the benefits of **diversification**, addressing the broader needs of residents along with other essential **community services**, particularly in rural areas where economic pressures are seeing these gradually disappear.





Here are a few ideas that publicans have already adopted which are helping to connect people around their pub.

1. **Promote your premises as a community space, attracting a broader audience than just the traditional pub goer.**

- Put yourself in the shoes of your potential customers and think about the design and layout of your pub. What does your external signage and appearance say to someone who has never been in your premises? Are the doors clearly signed and physically accessible and welcoming? Does it tell people what is going on with community groups, activities and how to get involved and connected?
- Think about how someone would feel walking into your pub for the first time. Would they feel intimidated, for example, by regulars sitting at the bar blocking the servery? Does the design and layout allow someone to sit on their own without feeling awkward? How do you create an opportunity to chat and connect people, if that is what they are looking for?
- It may help to rearrange your furniture at different times of the day to accommodate specific groups and activities - young parents with push chairs, people with companion dogs, wheelchairs, and walking aids.
- Think about background music and other service considerations that make your offer more accessible and welcoming.
- Do you have free WiFi, accessible plugs and tables where someone can sit and work over a morning coffee? Working from home can be socially isolating when people have been used to a busy office.
- Ensure any disabled access and facilities are clearly shown on the external signage, as this clearly signals you are open to everyone.
- Incorporate a community café into your premises – this is often seen as more accessible to the community during the daytime, or culturally as a space where alcohol is not served.
- Make any surplus outside space available to community groups to use – this is a great way to engage residents outside before inviting them to join in - A community garden or hens, allotments, or a children's play and games area.
- Similarly, if you have outbuildings these can be transformed into community sheds. There are inspirational examples of 'men's and women's sheds' opening around the country to support people of all ages through emotional, social or collective loneliness.
- If you have a large car park it can become the focal point for supporting regular farmers' markets, Christmas fayres, local artisan stalls and beer and food festivals. Again, these give people a reason to get out, where they may bump in to people they know and stop for a chat.
- Don't forget the importance of your community profile on social media and online space. The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in some amazing virtual pub experiences; quiz nights, bingo sessions, you name it, it can be created through online meeting and video platforms. Imagine the opportunities to broadcast live to residents who may want to join in social events from home, particularly those who are shielding, in quarantine or housebound.
- Make sure any function spaces or meeting rooms are advertised and available for local community groups, charities, or committees to use. This will help you to engage them to join in and help reduce loneliness in your area.

2 Create a community hub where there is always something going on.

- As with the examples already highlighted it is about being proactive and listening to what the residents and community want, and then helping them to do it. For one publican this meant buying an apple press, enabling everyone to harvest their crop and produce their own local apple juice.
- Most publicans will be familiar with traditional pub and board games with competition nights and sports teams – think about how you introduce new customers and residents in to an already established group. Some people may not have the confidence without your help.
- How about live theatre productions (for example, through the 'Inn Crowd' initiative) inside or out depending on the weather? Watching a performance can be a good way to socialise and build confidence with others when on your own.
- Start up a range of clubs, enabling residents to mix and meet regularly to build new friendship groups – cinema, lunch, puddings hobbies, languages, knitting, keep fit, you name it and people may want to do it.
- Maybe use the pub as a meeting point for people before going off somewhere together – dog walking, excursions, fundraising or volunteering. A bacon butty, coffee and social afterwards works well.
- You might be able to create a barter club at your premises where the community share trades and skills with each other. A tech savvy local might want help with DIY skills in return for giving their time to help others with digital or internet access problems.

The negative effects of Covid-19 will be felt by many people over the coming years, affecting our lives, our economy, our jobs, and our mental health. Individuals, families, and communities have and will continue to come together to support and help each other.



3. Diversify to provide community services and in the process keep residents connected.

- This is what Pub is The Hub has been doing since 2001, supporting communities and publicans to retain essential services, particularly in rural areas.
- Examples and case studies are available on the Pub is The Hub website - such as installing a village store, bakery, deli, Post Office, or a tourist gift and artisan craft shop.
- Alternatively, it might be about evolving the pub offer to provide an off-licence, takeaway food, library and book exchange in the pub, computer station or parcel drop behind the bar.
- Do you have spare rooms that could be converted into flexible offices for space strapped locals now having to adjust to working from home? Maybe a business breakfast or after work club to replace the social interaction previously provided in the office would be popular.
- The critical thing is keeping the community connected, preventing the gradual isolation of residents as local services disappear. It is essential that members of the community take ownership of the services, volunteering and getting involved in the day to day running.

Many of the helpers might otherwise be sitting at home susceptible to isolation and feelings of loneliness themselves.





Alexandra: Meetup Mondays
It's my pleasure to contribute these sugar cookies to your Meetup Mondays! (Recipe on back w/ Allergens!)
You're doing such a wonderful thing here - it makes me so proud to live in Wimbledon! Stay Warm!
Kind Regards, Krista Bose ♥♥

So why get involved with the Join Inn call to action?

- ✓ It is **the right thing to do** as a responsible member of society and it is so rewarding seeing new friendships blossom overtime.
- ✓ It **makes commercial sense** as communities that come together, stay together, keeping your business viable and sustainable into the future.
- ✓ **Pubs are changing** - just think back to when the smoking ban came in. To **stay relevant and connected** with their communities the traditional pub and publican are having to **broaden their appeal** to tech savvy youngsters, working from home generation and an ageing population.
- ✓ You **may be eligible for a grant** through Pub is The Hub for projects associated with community services. Alternatively, funding may be available through other government or charitable organisations where action is being taken to tackle loneliness in your area.



pub is the hub

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