



Addressing loneliness in emerging adulthood: What do we know and what do we need to know?

Online workshop 2-4pm on 9th June 2021



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Notes from the workshop on 9th June 2021.

Useful links & papers from the Chat:

Autumn Roesch-Marsh, Ruth Emond, Care Experience and Friendship: Theory and International Evidence to Improve Practice and Future Research, *The British Journal of Social Work*, Volume 51, Issue 1, January 2021, Pages 132–149, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcaa131>

James Duggan's research projects on loneliness with young people:
<https://www.lonelinessconnectsus.org>

Role of age, gender and cultural differences in loneliness:
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0191886920302555>

Loneliness Lab Knowledge Hub: <https://www.lonelinesslab.org/knowledge-hub>

Review: Alleviating loneliness in young people - a meta-analysis of interventions:
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32406165/>

Guidance on how to develop complex interventions to improve health and healthcare:
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6701588/pdf/bmjopen-2019-029954.pdf>

BRIEF: EVIDENCE-INFORMED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH FEELING LONELY, ISOLATED & DISCONNECTED: <https://emergingminds.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Co-RAY-Briefing-Loneliness-Isolation-Version-1.0.pdf>

Closeness, loneliness, support: Core ties and significant ties in personal communities:
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0378873311000839>

Bouwman's PhD thesis has a full chapter on interventions on loneliness evaluation

<https://research.vu.nl/en/publications/coping-in-loneliness-interventions-the-online-friendship-enrichme>

You can read the full summary of the LSIMHRN survey responses on research gaps here:

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychiatry/sites/psychiatry/files/summary_of_loneliness_in_emerging_adults_survey_responses_03.06.2021_0.pdf

KEYPOINTS from breakout room discussions on: 'What do we still need to know to make a difference in reducing loneliness in emerging adults?'

- **Group 1:** Thinking in terms of communities not just individuals, different forms of "loneliness" and how they relate to different kinds of need for relationships with other people, different timescales of loneliness and how people who are briefly lonely at transitions probably need something different from people who are long-term stuck in self-defeating cycles and might need something more cognitive, the possibility that belonging and connectedness might be more useful concepts than loneliness, the value of natural experiments regarding group experiences that seem to impact on loneliness (e.g. the alpha course) in helping understand what might work.
- **Group 2:** (i) Young people in different areas find it hard to identify places where they can hang out: need to create areas they can come together; (ii) Young people can find it stigmatising to live in a deprived area (and are also stigmatised due to being identified as lonely); (iii) Need to develop novel age-appropriate approaches e.g. board games that can be delivered to all young people.
- **Group 3:** (i) the voices of emerging adults is missing from the discussion - how do individuals experience loneliness? What do they do to address it; (ii) measures of loneliness are inadequate - we are not capturing the experience of loneliness, and we may be missing information about emerging adults when depending on traditional methods; (iii) we also had a discussion about place and belonging - there is some current work being done about place (places where emerging adults feel connected/disconnected) and if that is connected to physical place, or other sources of belongingness.
- **Group 4:** (i) Need for standardised outcome measures that are meaningful to young people, (ii) Need for more qualitative studies exploring what loneliness means to children and young people and also what social connectedness means - and what children and young people want and what kind of supports and interventions would be acceptable to them before co-producing interventions with children and young people; (iii) Understanding how the built environment can facilitate or inhibit social connectedness - importance of social spaces - and spaces for different cohorts.
- **Group 5:** (i) Given the breadth of years we are talking about - what are the meaningful transition points and how can we map social skills required into those transition points? (ii) Stepping away from the individual focus and looking more at community and the idea of social responsibility and engagement from an early age - community and culture! (iii) How do you reach the more dispersed groups of young people? Including those not in education, employment or training?

(iv)) What about focusing on the post-university group? Also - is it worth involving representatives from student support services?

- **Group 6:** Doing more research around interventions for younger children (pre-young adulthood), enabling primary school children to talk about loneliness; developing toolkits and techniques and interventions for parents, guardians and teachers to support the very young to discuss these issues – thinking this may have longer-term, downstream effects. Wider point we had which was to de-individualise interventions to look instead at the social barriers and stigmas associated with loneliness. Also: (a) sharing (best) practices from different countries, and how interventions can be generalized, translated etc; (b) more cross-cultural research; (c) prevention at very young age; (d) research on new creative methods for eliciting understandings and experiences of loneliness for much younger children; (e) more research on intersectionalities and loneliness; and (f) addressing the barriers to others to be open to lonely individual.
- **Group 7:** (i) Understanding structural, societal drivers of loneliness, including the role of poverty, relative lack of finances compared to peers; (ii) How to engage/hear from people within local communities early - to be able to prevent loneliness or provide prompt help; (iii) How to address digital exclusion - during the pandemic and for specific groups e.g. care leavers; (iv) Understanding what it means to be "social" and desired community/sense of belonging for a diverse society - it won't be the same for everyone. Social skills training implies there is one desired destination.
- **Group 8:** how to implement interventions without causing any further stigma or harm/ seeking to further understand experiences of young people: chronic experiences of loneliness vs transient experience, experiences due to exclusion due to race or religion/ consider young people not in university, research considering prevention of loneliness at community level - building inclusivity, connection, belonging BUT bearing in mind the key point that one size does not fit all - so an approach with individualised modules/ components.