

**THE
BEHAVIOURAL
INSIGHTS TEAM** ◆

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  Cabinet Office

Behavioural Science, Loneliness and Aging

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Session objectives

To understand:

- What we mean by Behavioural Science
- What is loneliness and why is it a problem for older people
- What is “behavioural” about loneliness
- How we might tackle loneliness amongst older people in practice

What is Behavioural Science?

Put very simply, Behavioural Science is the study of what makes people do the things they do (and, by extension, feel the things they feel).

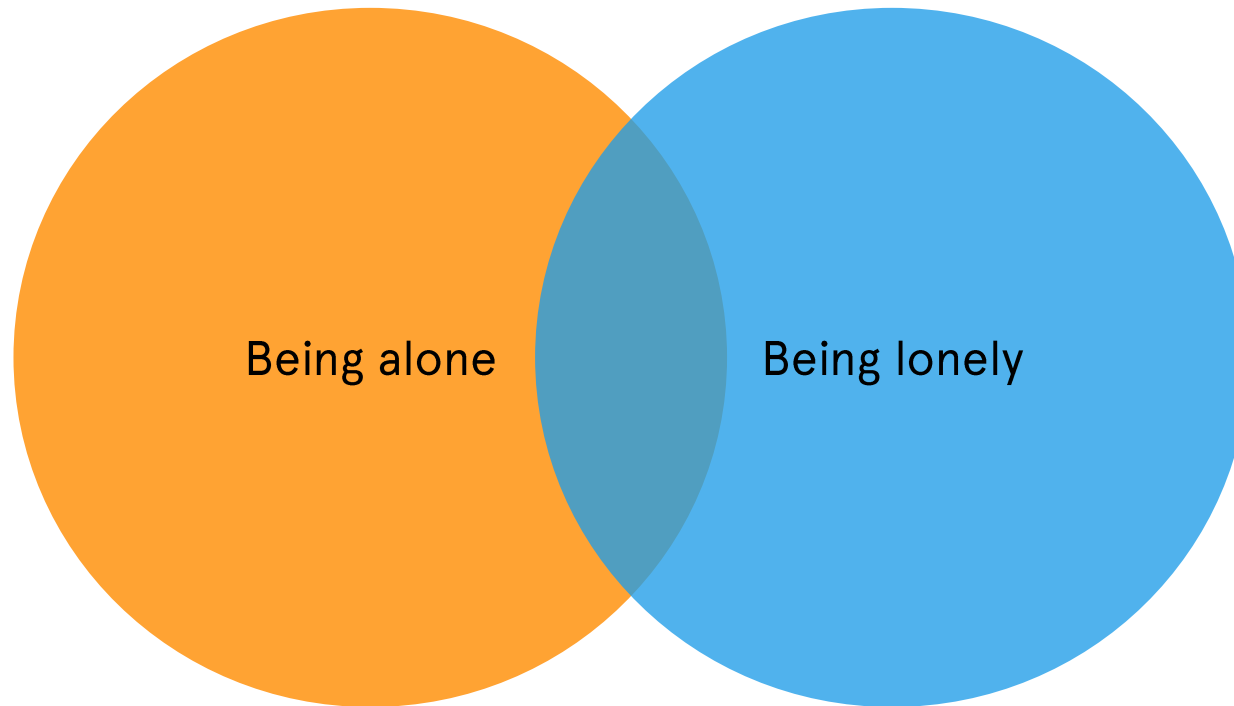
Academics study human behaviour in a whole range of fields:

- Psychology
- Economics
- Anthropology
- Marketing
- Sociology
- And beyond!

The Behavioural Insights Team applies lessons from this research to public policy problems.

What is loneliness?

Isolation and loneliness are different things – you can be surrounded by people and feel lonely. You can be alone but not lonely.



How much of a problem are isolation and loneliness for older people?

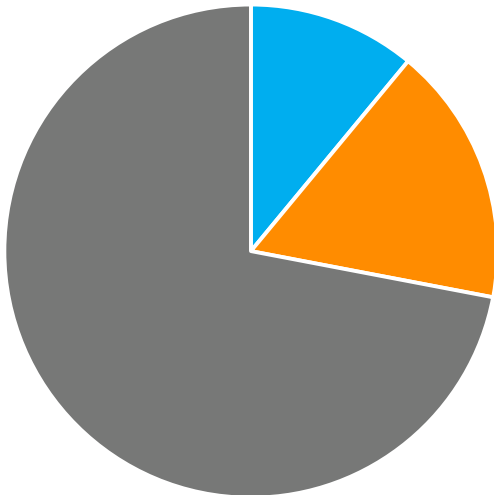
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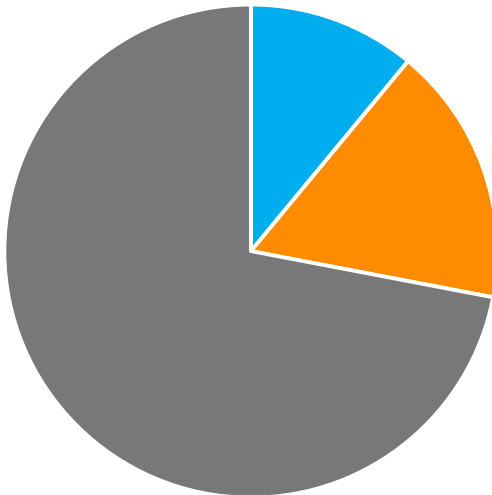
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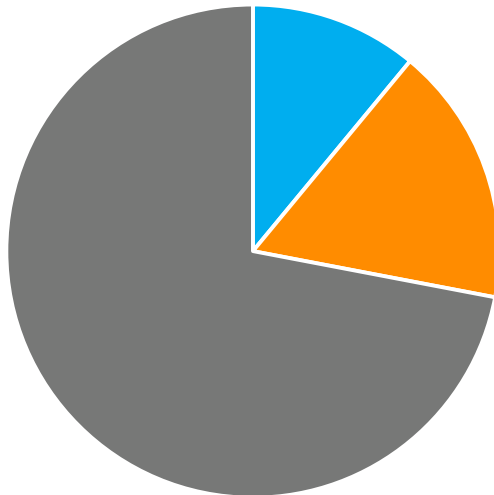
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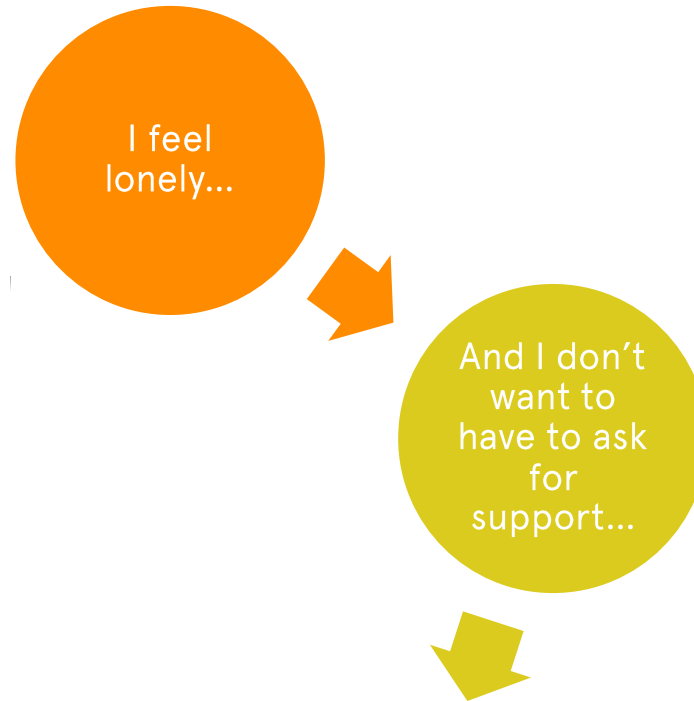


For older people, being lonely is as dangerous as cigarette smoking and more dangerous than obesity

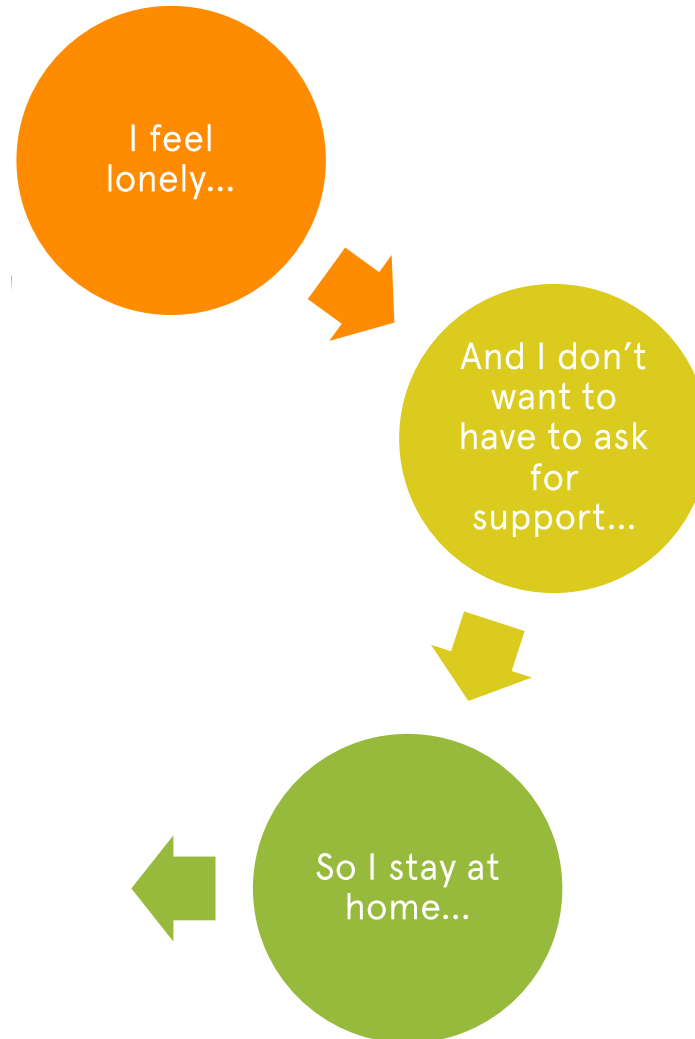
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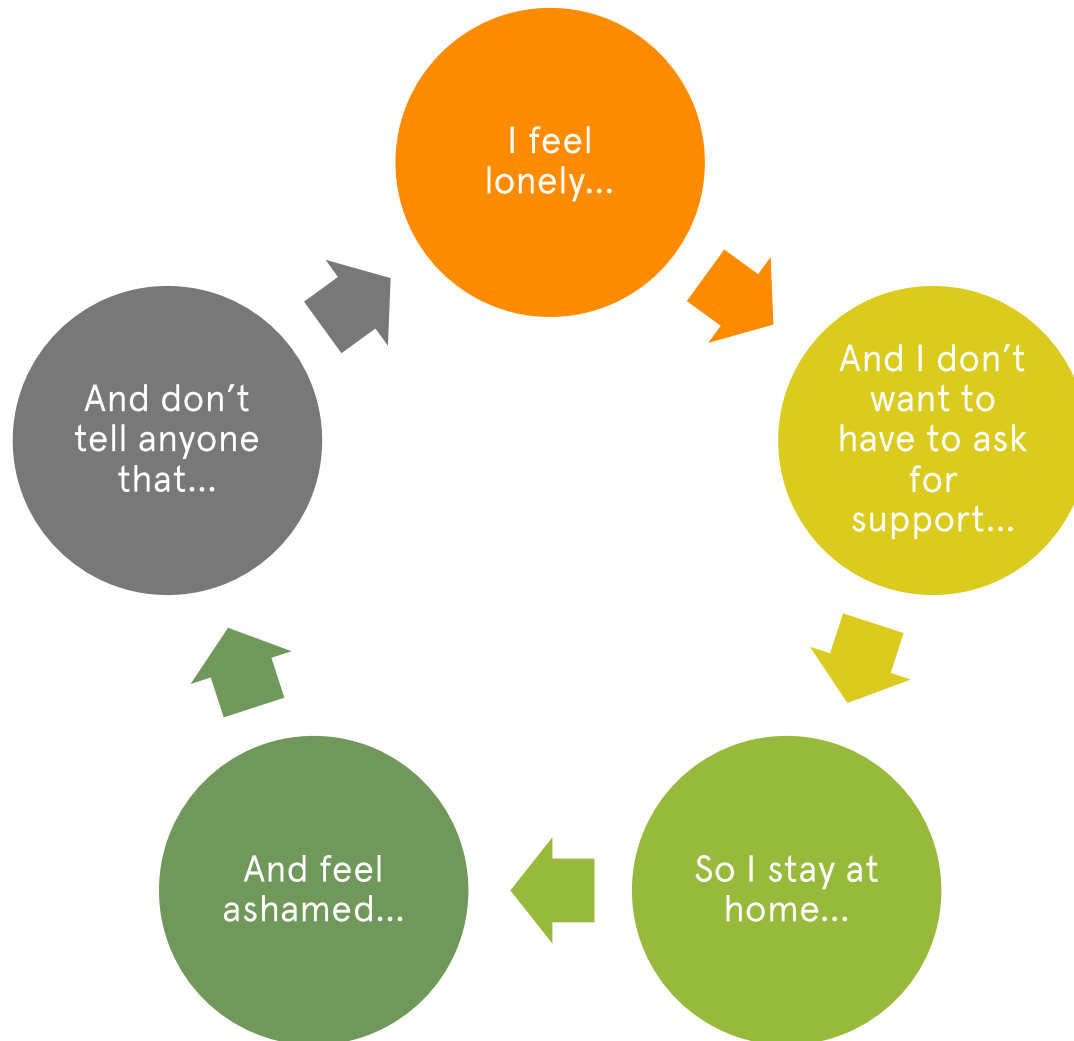
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Identifying lonely and isolated people is also hard as they are largely “invisible” by definition

We can ask people.... but that's flawed

We can identify people at the GP and prescribe them social activities

We can target those who receive other services for older people, such as State Pension, Pension Credits, bus passes or winter fuel allowance

We can ask younger people to identify elderly relatives they don't get to see often enough

We already know some things that work and can use these to help both older people and society at large

Predictability of visits
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What helps
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And what can we do to help once we've identified people?

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Group activities seem to work better than one on one interventions.

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Improving **perceived support** is more powerful than boosting actual support and opportunities

What helps alleviate loneliness?

Group activities seem to work better than one on one interventions.

Befriending services work for those who are doing the befriending but have limited impact on those being befriended



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