# Run clubs and pubs offer vital social lifelines in UK loneliness crisis



Across the UK, an increasing focus on addressing loneliness has led to a conversation about social environments that can provide connection and a sense of belonging. Both traditional venues like pubs and newer social fitness initiatives such as run clubs play a role in this dialogue, reflecting broader social changes and varied approaches to combatting isolation.

Loneliness in Britain is a concern highlighted by recent research. The Global Flourishing Study, which evaluated happiness, health, and financial security across 22 countries, placed the UK near the bottom of the ranking at 20th, influenced significantly by social relation metrics. According to the Office for National Statistics, one in four adults in the UK experience feelings of loneliness some of the time, with 7% reporting feeling lonely often or always. This issue has received governmental attention; the UK appointed a minister for loneliness in 2018, indicating the national priority given to this challenge.

Professor Andrea Wigfield, co-director of the Campaign to End Loneliness, likens loneliness to a basic human need akin to hunger or thirst, emphasising the essential nature of social interaction. She distinguishes between transient and chronic loneliness, with the latter linked to severe health implications including anxiety, depression, cardiovascular disease, and dementia. Her research underscores older adults and young people between 16 and 29 as the most affected groups, with young adults reporting some of the highest loneliness levels persistently.

The pandemic has exacerbated isolation, but as Wigfield notes, life transitions such as moving to a new location, bereavement, retirement, or changes in caregiving status are common triggers for loneliness. Young adults, in particular, confront the challenge of forming new social connections in unfamiliar environments, compounded by social media’s often distorted portrayals of others' social lives. Stephen Buckley from the mental health charity Mind highlights that social media can contribute to unrealistic expectations and feelings of exclusion, reinforcing the importance of genuine connection efforts.

Run clubs have surged in popularity as part of a growing trend towards social fitness. Such clubs combine physical exercise benefits with opportunities to meet and bond with others, creating a structured environment conducive to forming friendships. Members often describe a sense of camaraderie, support, and mutual encouragement that enhances social well-being alongside physical health. Buckley notes that running outdoors offers sensory engagement and a distraction from daily pressures, complementing mental health management.

Conversely, pubs retain their place as British social institutions, offering informal spaces where people can meet, chat, and develop social bonds. They provide a unique atmosphere defined by spontaneity and diverse interactions, ranging from casual conversations at the bar to shared experiences of events like watching football. While pub culture has faced declines due to various trends, its role in fostering community connections endures.

Wigfield emphasises that combating loneliness is not about choosing between one type of venue or activity over another but about cultivating meaningful relationships in various contexts. Activities—whether running, music, singing, or dining—are beneficial as long as they create points of connection. Effective social integration depends on finding activities that fit individual preferences and lifestyles, ensuring sustained engagement and enjoyment.

The experience of loneliness can alter perceptions, making social interactions more difficult, and creating a feedback loop that deepens isolation. Overcoming this requires active efforts to reach out and maintain relationships. Both run clubs and pubs contribute potential avenues for doing so by offering physical places and communities in which people can feel rooted.

Mind provides practical advice for those experiencing loneliness, including being patient, making new connections through shared interests, opening up to trusted individuals about feelings, engaging with online supportive communities, and seeking talking therapies to explore and manage loneliness. The charity also offers various helpline services for guidance and support.

In summary, the social landscapes of run clubs and pubs each present valuable opportunities to counteract loneliness through fostering connection. The choice between them is personal and depends on individual preferences, highlighting the importance of diverse social options in addressing this widespread issue. The Independent is reporting.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/facts-and-statistics/> - This page provides statistics on loneliness in the UK, including that 49.63% of adults reported feeling lonely occasionally, sometimes, often, or always in 2022, and approximately 7.1% experience chronic loneliness.
2. <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/people/> - This page introduces Professor Andrea Wigfield, co-director of the Campaign to End Loneliness, highlighting her role in addressing loneliness and social isolation.
3. <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/tackling-loneliness-with-holistic-interventions-by-professor-andrea-wigfield/> - An article by Professor Andrea Wigfield discussing the need for a holistic approach to tackling loneliness, emphasizing the importance of social interaction and community engagement.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/apr/07/37m-over-16s-in-britain-often-or-always-feel-lonely-ons-finds> - This article reports on findings from the Office for National Statistics indicating that 3.7 million adults in Britain often or always feel lonely, highlighting the widespread nature of the issue.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/apr/07/37m-over-16s-in-britain-often-or-always-feel-lonely-ons-finds> - The article also discusses the government's response, including the appointment of a £7.5 million fund to tackle loneliness in England, reflecting the national priority given to this challenge.
6. <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/its-not-the-end-of-the-campaign-to-end-loneliness/> - This article discusses the continuation of the Campaign to End Loneliness under the leadership of Professor Andrea Wigfield, emphasizing ongoing efforts to address loneliness in the UK.
7. <https://www.independent.co.uk/health-and-fitness/run-clubs-versus-pubs-loneliness-b2741413.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data