

This Fact Sheet identifies the key ‘trigger’ or risk factors that can cause loneliness and social isolation in older age. These factors can be used to help to identify those likely to be at risk or experiencing loneliness in a community.

Based on the research that has been conducted about loneliness and isolation amongst older people we know that there are an array of risk factors or triggers, including:

Personal circumstances:

- Living alone¹
- Being single, divorced, never married²
- Living on a low income³
- Living in residential care⁴

Transitions:

- Bereavement⁵
- Becoming a carer or giving up caring⁶
- Retirement⁷

Personal characteristics:

- Aged 75 plus⁸
- From an ethnic minority community⁹
- Being gay or lesbian¹⁰

Health and disability:

- Poor health¹¹
- Immobility¹²
- Cognitive impairment¹³
- Sensory impairment¹⁴
- Dual sensory impairment¹⁵

Geography i.e. living in an area:

- With high levels of material deprivation¹⁶
- In which crime is an issue¹⁷

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has produced an on-line tool to help identify isolated older people based on key triggers, based on research conducted in the borough:

<http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/healthandsocialcare/peoplefirst/triggertoolpages.aspx>

(See Case study: Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Older Persons’ Partnership Board).

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