



# MDC Bulletin

## Health and Wellbeing

Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020

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*Dear friends*

Welcome to this special bulletin in which we highlight health and wellbeing matters.

Your Council is part of the Mendip Health and Wellbeing Board. The Board meets quarterly with member organisations from various sectors. The aim of the Board is to improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities in Mendip, through collaboration and partnership working.

The plan is to give regular updates from these Board meetings, signpost links and to provide information to communities.

This winter, the focus is on loneliness.

Help is out there – when you know where to look. We do hope you find this bulletin useful and ask that you share the many links within it. Thank you.

*Community Health Team*

**Mendip District Council**

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## Connect over the festive period to help alleviate loneliness in Mendip

Christmas is undoubtedly going to look different this year. Many people may find themselves isolated, spending the festive period alone.

There are local organisations that offer support and help, and they've been pulled together and are listed in the Mendip Health Connections Directory found on the Mendip District Council website here: [www.mendip.gov.uk/healthandwellbeing](http://www.mendip.gov.uk/healthandwellbeing)

Mind in Mendip provides an emotional support and mental health helpline which is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Take a look at [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

There is also the 'army' of Community and Village Agents who provide confidential, practical community-based solutions for you, wherever you are in Mendip. Visit [ccslovesomerset.org/](http://ccslovesomerset.org/)

Volunteering can be a great way to get out and meet people. SPARK Somerset provide information, advice, training and support to the voluntary and community sector in Somerset. They also run the Volunteer Service, inspiring people to get involved and make a difference in their communities. Full details here [www.sparksomerset.org.uk/](http://www.sparksomerset.org.uk/)

Cllr. Helen Sprawson-White, Chair of Mendip District Council, said: "This time of year heightens feelings of loneliness because it is the time when families traditionally get together. The pandemic means that people's usual support networks and groups they belong to may have changed leaving them more alone.

"Never underestimate the power of small acts of kindness to others in your community. A phone call to find out how someone is feeling, whether they are warm, well and need anything can brighten a day."

## Funding for community groups to tackle loneliness

The Government announced that book clubs, walking groups and other community projects will be able to apply for a £4 million fund designed to help reduce loneliness in the coming months.

The **Local Connections Fund** is designed to help local organisations bring people and communities together as the country recovers from the coronavirus outbreak.

[www.gov.uk/government/news/community-groups-tackling-loneliness-to-benefit-from-4m-fund](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/community-groups-tackling-loneliness-to-benefit-from-4m-fund)

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## Scheme to prevent loneliness during the coronavirus outbreak

Living Letters is a project that connects people and develops intergenerational friendships to help prevent loneliness during the coronavirus pandemic. The Chickenshed charity has volunteers aged from 18-21 who want to connect with senior members of communities. If you have care homes or group settings that may benefit from this scheme to help prevent lockdown loneliness please contact [Rachely@chickenshed.org.uk](mailto:Rachely@chickenshed.org.uk) for more details.

Information: [www.chickenshed.org.uk/living-letters-four-week-project](http://www.chickenshed.org.uk/living-letters-four-week-project)

Video: [youtu.be/g23YjdBcQ0o](https://youtu.be/g23YjdBcQ0o)

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## It's good to talk

Loneliness is not a stand-alone issue and we may feel lonely due to other concerns, be it to do with our physical or mental health, financial or social situations.

**Talking Cafes** are held **online every Wednesday** on Facebook where a variety of issues are discussed: [en-gb.facebook.com/talkingcafesomerset/videos/585053925460521/](https://en-gb.facebook.com/talkingcafesomerset/videos/585053925460521/)

11am: with Community Council for Somerset (CCS) contact [carole@Somersetccc.org.uk](mailto:carole@Somersetccc.org.uk)

1pm-2pm – with Health Connections Mendip [mendip.healthconnections@nhs.net](mailto:mendip.healthconnections@nhs.net)  
Any organisation can have a slot, so please get in touch.

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## Volunteers needed

Supporting each other is a great way to reduce loneliness and several organisations are looking for volunteers.

**SPARK a Change.** This website provides a platform for organisations and groups to post volunteering opportunities. If you want to look for an opportunity or register as a volunteer check out: [www.sparkachange.org.uk/](http://www.sparkachange.org.uk/)

**Christmas Boxes initiative.** The Community Council for Somerset (CCS) have large boxes in shops where people can place donations of seasonal gifts. These will be distributed to those unable to connect with others over Christmas.

Each year, CCS Somerset Agents gather all the events happening over the festive period in the parishes where they work. Full listings can be viewed here: [somersetagents.org/somersetchristmasevents/](http://somersetagents.org/somersetchristmasevents/)

**Good Neighbours Scheme.** The CCS are also encouraging some COVID response groups to continue their valuable work through Good Neighbours schemes: [ccslovesomerset.org/Somerset-good-neighbours-scheme/](http://ccslovesomerset.org/Somerset-good-neighbours-scheme/)

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## Digital capabilities survey

Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP) carried out a digital capabilities survey. Information went out to 27,000 people on the NHS shielded list in July 2020, and 3000 people participated.

The main area of concern was that people's activity levels may have dropped over the first lockdown and the accessibility or confidence in using digital devices was identified as a possible barrier to exercising where a lot of sessions were held online.

People may feel lonely through an inability to have face-to-face activities which further exacerbates the problem when online activities are a challenge, whether this be due to no access to a digital device or a lack of confidence in using it.

Results from the survey Explore the insight pack that SASP created around the Shielded Patient List, view the survey results and watch a recording of the feedback session here: [www.sasp.co.uk/shielded-list-survey](http://www.sasp.co.uk/shielded-list-survey)

However, there is a lot of support available, both in acquiring digital devices and in support training.

- **Free digital devices:**

Health Connections Mendip have some digital devices available which it is keen to get out there into the community. When all these devices have been distributed, the organisation can bid for more.

Community Council for Somerset (CCS) run Rehome a Phone scheme. They've had lots of donations from the public. These phones, laptops and tablets get refurbished and distributed to the community.

- **Digital training sessions:**

Health Connections Mendip runs Online Connector training sessions which includes Digital Connector training: [healthconnectionsmandip.org/support-for-you/training/](https://healthconnectionsmandip.org/support-for-you/training/)

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## **Warm homes this winter**

We are spending a lot more time at home, so keeping warm is even more important. It can be further isolating for those who cannot afford to pay their energy bills and/or have issues with homes being energy efficient.

**Support for warm homes** available:

- Green Homes Grant [www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-the-green-homes-grant-scheme](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-the-green-homes-grant-scheme)
- Warm Home discounts are available where people can access up to £140 off their bill through their energy provider [www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme](https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme)
- The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) has help and support available [www.cse.org.uk/](https://www.cse.org.uk/)

Further support from Community Council for Somerset (CCS) is available (see below). For more details, contact Carole Smith [carole@Somersetccc.org.uk](mailto:carole@Somersetccc.org.uk)

- **A large food resilience group throughout Somerset**

Foodbanks are already members, but if anyone would like to join, they only need to provide a telephone number to be part of the WhatsApp group.

- **White goods**

Beds, fridge freezers etc, available to those in need.

- **Clothes banks**

For example, outside winter coats from lost property in clubs.

- **Bike donations**

To get a bike, individuals should call the Village Agent helpline and speak to their local village agent team on 01823 331222.

It costs £65 to acquire a reconditioned bike, however there is funding to cover this fee - so the bike is FREE if an individual is on a low income, lacks transport, is affected by mental health problems or has been negatively impacted by the pandemic. There are no specific cut-off criteria here. It is not limited to the areas outlined; it is just a case of discussing your circumstances with a local Village Agent to assess eligibility.

- **Car donation scheme**

Cars that are too good to scrap but where owners do not want to put them through an MOT. CCS take them on and make them roadworthy. This initiative is like the bike donation scheme.

- Local organisations and groups can also receive support with funding or advice:

**SPARK funding portal:** [www.sparksomerset.org.uk/somerset-funding-portal](http://www.sparksomerset.org.uk/somerset-funding-portal)

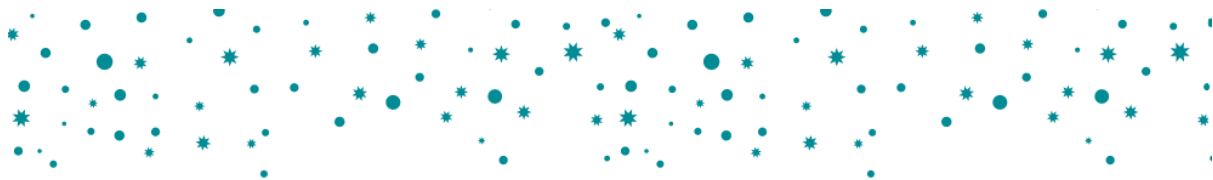
**SPARK online forum:** [www.sparksomerset.org.uk/support/forums](http://www.sparksomerset.org.uk/support/forums)



**Health and Wellbeing in Mendip**

[www.mendip.gov.uk/healthandwellbeing](http://www.mendip.gov.uk/healthandwellbeing)

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# Connect at Christmas



## Get support this Christmas



**Directory of Services in Mendip:**  
**Health Connections Mendip**  
[healthconnectionsmandip.org](http://healthconnectionsmandip.org)  
01373 468368

**Community and Village Agents:**  
**CCS**  
[ccslovesomerset.org](http://ccslovesomerset.org)  
0300 123 3393

**Physical Activity:**  
**SASP**  
[sasp.co.uk/be-active-at-home](http://sasp.co.uk/be-active-at-home)

**Volunteering:**  
**SPARK Somerset**  
[sparksomerset.org.uk](http://sparksomerset.org.uk)

**Mental Health Support:**  
**Mind**  
[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)  
0300 123 3393

**Silverline**  
[www.thesilverline.org.uk](http://www.thesilverline.org.uk)  
0800 4708090

**Childline**  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)  
0800 1111

**Young Minds**  
[youngminds.org.uk](http://youngminds.org.uk)



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This MDC Bulletin special edition was issued by Mendip's Marketing and Media Team.

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