



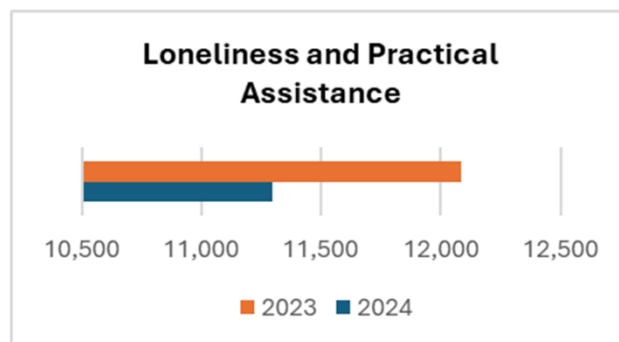
## **The Salvation Army UK and Ireland Territory**

### **7 Loneliness Headlines (Jan-Dec 2024)**

**(Source = UKI Territory Atlas Database)**

## Headline 1.

From January–December 2024  
131 Corps (Churches) and Centres (23% of all UKI Corps & Centres)  
recorded 11,293 individual pieces of practical assistance\*  
with the tag of 'Loneliness and Isolation'.



### The Context of our Salvation Army Loneliness Response.

A key objective for The Salvation Army's response to Loneliness across the UK and Ireland Territory is to improve the evidence base on what is happening around Loneliness in the 600+ frontline Corps (Churches) and Centres across the 5 countries where we serve.

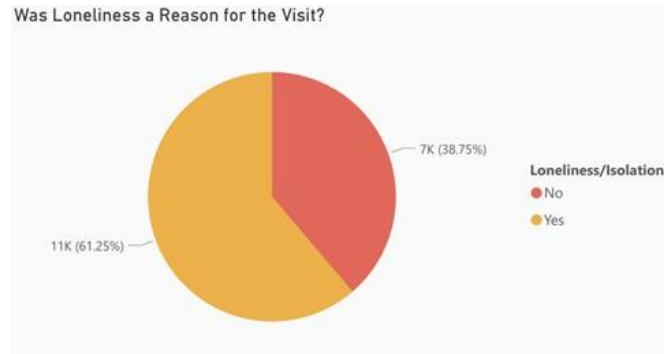
The development of the ATLAS system is evolving and growing, and this gives us a helpful insight into the prevalence of Loneliness and Isolation in our communities. This report for January -December 2024 briefly outlines an overview into some of the factors and findings that are central to our local interventions. The data highlights a blend of 'key elements' which are so important for effectiveness but also reflect the diversity and breadth of multi-layered support systems that in exist in various places across the UKI Territory. These elements include:

- skilful, gentle first engagement from local Salvation Army officers, employees, programme leaders and volunteers to make people feel welcome and overcome hesitancy about joining a group or accessing support.
- Effective local support to unpick and address problems contributing to an individual's loneliness and to identify next steps.
- Developments in seeing our weekday and Sunday services through the 'lens' of Loneliness will allow us to develop new thinking and opportunities.
- We are providing conditions for trust and relationship building and providing environments for social engagement to suit individual needs and preferences.
- TSA provide in many places opportunities for learning social skills, increasing participation and growth in confidence by being responsive to need or being person-centred.

\* An individual can make multiple visits

## Headline 2.

Loneliness and Isolation was given as a reason for support on 61% of the visits made by individuals to our Corps and Centres



**Our data emphasises the point and we need to be far more intentional about how we cultivate relationships in community.**

***To Be Lonely is to be Human.*** If we are courageous enough to admit it, and bold enough to talk about it, I am sure we will discover just how common it is to live with loneliness. In a society where we are increasingly and ever-closer connected, but we feel lonelier than ever before, clearly something is going wrong. We do not like to talk about loneliness. We like even less to talk about the fact that the experience of faith does not automatically heal it.

Friendship is challenging in a society like this—even in the church. But the answer is not to lower our expectations and prepare for loneliness. The answer is to confront the challenge directly, reject the isolation and division of our times, and embrace real, meaningful, face-to-face relationships with all people.

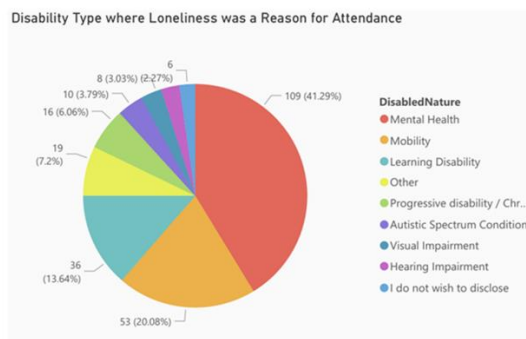
The Salvation Army is a worldwide Christian church and registered charity, which has been fighting against social inequality and transforming lives for 160 years.

We want people who are marginalised and socially excluded to know that they matter to us and to God. Our Friendship Clubs, Chatty Café's, drop-in centres, care homes, youth clubs, worship services, singing groups places to meet people 'like you' are all examples of proven interventions offered by us to offer community, connection and friendship.



### Headline 3.

For individuals where loneliness and isolation was recorded as the reason for needing support just over 4 out of every 10 people told us they had some form of mental health concerns.



### Mental Health and Loneliness

**There is considerable evidence from a range of national and international research that loneliness causes worse mental health and wellbeing outcomes.** Loneliness is a natural human emotion and so whilst anyone can experience loneliness, certain risk factors increase our chances of chronic and lasting loneliness that can affect our mental health. These include: -

- Being unemployed.
- Living alone and maybe with a long-term health condition or disability.
- Living in poor housing or in rented accommodation.
- Our data shows that anyone at any age can be lonely, but national statistics show that those between 16 and 24 years old are at greater risk.
- Being a carer, or someone from an ethnic minority community or being a refugee or asylum seeker will increase.
- Being in LGBTQ+ community.

The **stigma of loneliness** makes it hard to talk about. People worry about being judged or feeling like a burden. Recognising that loneliness is not linked to how old you are, where you live or your relationship status. Understanding this can help break down the stigma of loneliness. This stigma can make it hard for people to seek help.

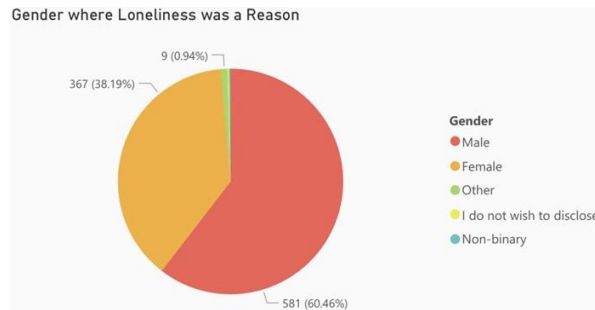
**Case Study - Atherton.** Our Salvation Army mental health lounge in Atherton, Wigan, gives support to people in the local community who are struggling with their mental health. The crisis café, known as Crisis Harbour, located in our Salvation Army church building is run by accredited councillors in a therapeutic environment for people in times of crisis, including needing support for grief, depression, addiction and suicidal thoughts.

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/news/crisis-cafe-launches-supporting-local-people-time-need>

#### Headline 4.

For individuals where loneliness and isolation was recorded as the reason for needing support

Men (60%) were in the majority, 40% of women.



**This is the first time that that The Salvation Army have reported on Gender in our understanding of Loneliness.**

Most of us will experience loneliness at some point in our lives, regardless of age, circumstance, and background.

However, our data shows that many of the men who receive support from the Salvation Army are men living in retirement. Statistically in the UK men are the least likely to confide in anyone that they are feeling lonely or isolated. A YouGov survey found that 42% aged sixty and above had no one they could talk to about feelings, or about feeling Lonely and Isolated.

Although it is stereotypical, it is often true that men find it harder than women to open up about particular emotions, in the greater part, due to social conditioning that means many men struggle more with the vulnerability and intimacy needed to open up about their range of feelings.

#### **Case Study - The Salvation Army – Reading Lower Earley**

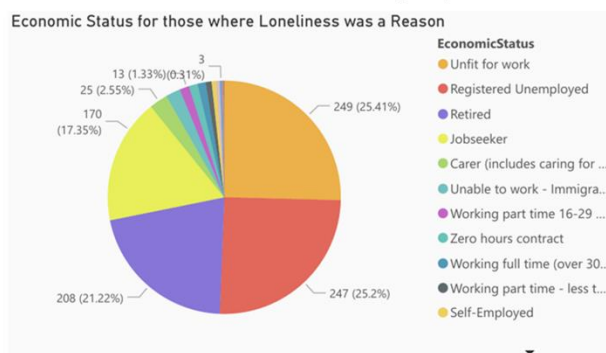
*In a world where the pressures of life can often feel overwhelming, The Salvation Army in Reading Lower Earley is offering men a unique sanctuary: a monthly men's breakfast at its community café. This gathering, held in a warm and welcoming environment, is more than just a chance to enjoy a cup of coffee—it's a lifeline for men seeking connection, support, and a space to simply be themselves.*



<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/news/salvation-armys-mens-breakfast-recipe-community-and-wellbeing>

## Headline 5.

For individuals where loneliness and isolation was recorded as the reason they received support, 50% of all people receiving practical assistance were either Unemployed or 'unfit for work'.



**Our data suggests there is a need for greater understanding and investigation into the wider societal impacts of loneliness in the working-age population.**

In his book *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, published in 1890, William Booth the founder of The Salvation Army attacked the three greatest social evils of his day: poverty, homelessness and unemployment. Booth planned a great scheme for social and spiritual regeneration. Its keystone – ‘Work for All.’

In 2025 our Salvation Army Employment Plus service offers tailored support to help people become job ready. Our aim is to help job seekers get a job and stay in work.

Loneliness and Isolation means that access to work or training is a barrier for many. Our Employment Plus staff seek to establish where an individual is as a starting point, which is key to understanding what might be preventing them from finding employment.

Evidence that people benefit from the service they receive is the affirming statistic that 90% of people using the service attest to feeling better about their mental health because they are engaged.

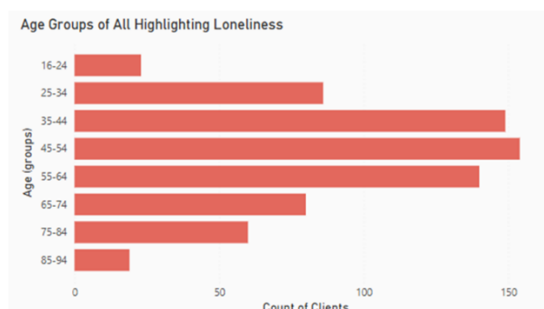


<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/employment-plus>



## Headline 6.

All age groups from 16–94 years reported Loneliness as an issue when receiving support. For individuals where loneliness and isolation was recorded as a reason for support, the 45–54 age group has the highest number of people attending our Corps/Centres due to Loneliness.



Our responses to Loneliness and Isolation are needed across the life-course.

The Salvation Army in our various ministry disciplines across the UKI have been providing for many years the ‘proven and recognised’ interventions outlined to tackle loneliness at the local level. Our ‘No One Alone’ project launched in 2024 started a joined-up response and provides data-informed approaches to support the response being provided in local communities.

This includes:

- **Findings** to deepen our knowledge and to make our response more effective.
- **Stories** from our Corps (Churches) and Centres implementing change to their work.
- **Ideas and resources** to focus on building relationships within our programmes.

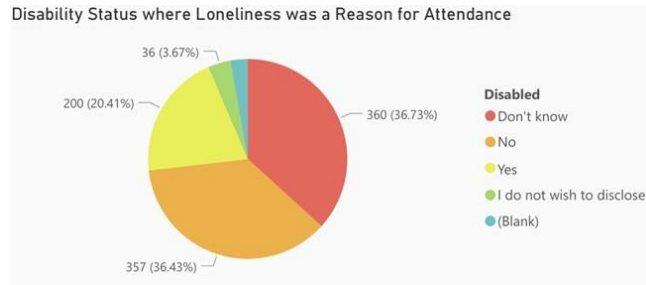
Recognising the impact of social isolation and loneliness on the physical, mental and social health of people of all ages the local Corps or Centre and contracted services can potentially offer integrated opportunities.

<https://www.salvationist.org.uk/resources/community-engagement/no-one-alone>



## Headline 7.

For individuals where loneliness and isolation was recorded as a reason for support. 20% of individuals told us they live with a disability or have mobility issues.



In research from 2024 Disability Rights UK showed that Disabled people are significantly more likely to report feeling lonely, than the general population, with findings showing that two in five of people living with disabilities experience loneliness, compared to 29% of the general population.

The Salvation Army Enabled ministry provides spiritual and social fellowship for anyone with a disability and their carers. A key message of the group is that it is open for anyone from any age or background.

‘Keeping in Touch’ is a befriender service from Enabled, created to reduce isolation and loneliness among people with disabilities by fostering meaningful social connections. The service addresses a wide range of social barriers including limited mobility, societal attitudes and lack of accessible transport. Participants can keep connected through video calls and messaging or in-person meet-ups. The flexibility ensures that each member can engage in a way that suits their preferences and abilities.



<https://www.salvationist.org.uk/faith/our-territory/territorial-directory/enabled>