

Social Isolation and Loneliness Resources Guide

Easy Ways to Build Connections



Image courtesy of The Clowder Group

Why a “Happy to Chat” bench in YOUR community?

“The chat bench removes that invisible social barrier that prevents people from saying ‘hello.’ ”

— Founder of the Chat Bench program in London

With the help of simple signage, an existing bench is transformed into a low-cost “chat bench” and a community can publicly demonstrate its dedication to ending loneliness by designating public spaces as a place to meet and connect.*

Scan here with your phone to answer 3 questions about your experience with isolation and loneliness.



How to Designate a “Happy to Chat” Bench in Your Community

Consider existing benches and how they may be rebranded as “Happy to Chat” benches or if new benches are required.

Reach out to appropriate officials in your community with a plan for where the benches would be most effective due to pedestrian traffic.

Engage community residents in the process and aim for maximum publicity to get the word out about this concept.

Local Example Location:

Bridgewater, MA

Inspiration: Bridgewater is a college town with a lot of pedestrian traffic. The Council on Aging (COA) director was motivated to consider ways of building connections between older residents of the community and younger students.

Program Contact: Bridgewater Council on Aging 508-697-0929

* “Happy to Chat” (Bridgewater), Coyle, Caitlin and Massihzadegan, Setarreh, “Promising Little Things to Strengthen Social Connections” (2021). Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging Publications. 56. <https://scholarworks.umb.edu/demographyofaging/56>; and Coyle, C., Gleason, S., and Bui, C. (2020). It’s the Little Things: A Community Resource for Strengthening Social Connections. Special thanks to UMass Boston and AARP Massachusetts for their consent to abstract and republish this information.

Whether you’re looking for connections or to volunteer, here are some resources to get you started.

BAGLY Social Support Meetings

Support meetings for LGBTQ+ youth to connect with peers. **617-227-4313**
www.bagly.org/youth-programs

Best Buddies Adult Friendship Program

Helps create friendships for those with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities. **800-892-8339**
www.bestbuddies.org

Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Eastern Massachusetts

Helps develop one-on-one relationships to support social and emotional development for youth. **617-542-9090**
www.emassbigs.org/

Boston Appalachian Mountain Club

Provides year-round group hiking for non-members and members.
Email: localwalks@amcboston.org
www.amcboston.org/committee/walks/

Boston Cares - Allies for Immigrants

Conversation groups to enhance English skills for adults.
Email: jxayachak@bostoncares.org
www.bostoncares.org/

Boston’s AgeStrong Creative Aging Program Sponsored by Goddard House Community Initiatives

Engages older adults in participatory arts programming including art, music, dance and other forms of creative expression.
617-635-4366
www.boston.gov/Age-Strong-Events

CaptionCall

Phones for individuals with hearing loss. Transcribes conversations so other speakers’ words appear on your CaptionCall screen
www.captioncall.com

Ethos Community Cafes

Boston congregate meal programs nurture social connections for older adults.
617-522-6700
www.ethocare.org/services/nutrition/community-cafes/

Fenway Health LGBTQIA+ Helpline

(25+) Available for LGBTQIA+ adults Mon-Sat. 6-11 PM.
617-267-9001
www.fenwayhealth.org/care/wellness-resources/help-lines/

Fenway Health Peer Listening Line

(25 and under) A safe space for LGBTQIA+ youth to speak with peers (ages 16-25).
617-267-2535
www.fenwayhealth.org/care/wellness-resources/help-lines/

FriendshipWorks FriendshipWorks' mission is to end elder isolation and, through a menu of programs, create connections by matching volunteers with older adults (60+) in need of assistance and companionship.
617-482-1510
www.fw4elders.org

Gay for Good Boston

Connects the LGBTQ community with local volunteer projects.
Email: boston@gayforgood.org
www.gayforgood.org/boston/

GoGo Grandparent

Service assists older adults ordering rides, pharmacy deliveries, groceries, and more.
855-464-6872
www.gogograndparent.com

Healthful Chat

Online chat rooms offer a support system for those who live with a physical disability or mobility issue.
www.healthfulchat.org/physical-disability-mobility-issues-chat-room.html

LGBTQIA+ Aging Project Weekly Zoom Drop-In Group

Informal discussion groups created to keep LGBTQIA+ older adults connected.
857-313-6590
www.fenwayhealth.org/the-fenway-institute/lgbtqia-aging-project/programs-support-groups

LGBTQIA+ Community Cafés

LGBTQIA+ older adults can share a meal and connect with one another virtually and in person. To find a program in your area, contact: **857-313-6590**
www.fenwayhealth.org/care/medical/lgbt-nutrition/

Little Brothers-Friends of the Elderly

Opportunities to form intergenerational friendships. **617-524-8882**
www.lbfeboston.org/

Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired Support Groups

Once a month peer support meetings which provide support for those coping with serious vision loss. **888-613-2777**
www.mabvi.org/services/support-groups/

Massachusetts Councils on Aging (COA)

COAs across the state connect community members with memory cafes, transportation services, health information programs and more. To find your local Council on Aging: **www.mcoonline.com/what-is-a-coa/coa-directory/**

Mass Ride Match

Helps vulnerable populations receive access to safe transportation in their area.
800-483-2500
www.massridematch.org

Memory Cafes in MA

Find Memory Cafes near you and enjoy welcoming gatherings for individuals living with dementia, their family members, friends and caregivers.
www.memorycafedirectory.com/memory-cafes-in-massachusetts/

Men's Group

An online men's support group that provides space to speak about emotions and life issues.
www.mensgroup.com

Neighbor Brigade

Connects community members with residents facing difficulties and needing help with meal preparation, household chores, and more.
855-241-4357
Email: info@neighborbrigade.org
www.neighborbrigade.org

Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD)

A 1:1 mentoring program to empower ages 6-24 with disabilities to meet their full potential. **617-556-4075**
www.pyd.org

PureSpark

Virtual peer support groups for people of color in MA, with a focus on Black women.
www.yourpurespark.com/

Samaritans

A 24/7 helpline for those in need of immediate crisis support, allows people to speak one on one via phone or text.
Crisis 877-870-4673
www.samaritanshope.org

Silent Book Club

Promotes social health and self-care and provides time to connect with new people, have food, and read their book of choice.
Address: 338 Newbury Street, Boston
617-267-8688
www.tridentbookscafe.com/event

Sofa Singers

Virtual 45-minute community singing programs that also teaches participants about songs.
www.thesofasingers.com

The Dinner Party

Adults in their 20s and 30s who have lost a close friend or family members can join a virtual "dinner table" support group and connect with peers facing similar struggles.
Email: info@thedinnerparty.org
www.thedinnerparty.org

The Emotional PPE Project

Connects healthcare workers impacted by the Covid-19 crisis with licensed mental health professionals who can help. No cost. No insurance. Just a trained professional to talk to.
<https://directory.emotionalppe.org/healthcare-workers/individual-therapy>

Virtual Knit or Crochet from Home

Virtually meet others while you knit items to donate to local charities.
Email: volunteers@bostoncares.org
<https://bostoncares.org/opportunity/a0C1J00000IzHXKUA3>

For more information on how to reach out and connect, go to
www.reachoutma.com

Among Other Resources, You'll Find:

"It's the Little Things: A Community Resource for Strengthening Social Connections"
"Promising Little Things to Strengthen Social Connections"
"10 Small Ways to Reach Out"

Reach out Massachusetts is the Task Force to End Loneliness & Build Community's campaign to mobilize individuals, communities and organizations to address social isolation and is facilitated by AARP Massachusetts and the Gerontology Institute at UMass Boston.

Compiled by the Event Committee for the advanced screening of the documentary All the Lonely People
www.allthelonelypeoplefilm.com/

