Everyone can feel lonely now and again. But as we get older and friends and relatives move away, or we suffer a bereavement of a loved one, being at home on our own can be especially difficult. Health problems or other circumstances can make it hard to get out and about, stay in touch with people, or form new friendships. If this happens it can then be difficult to tell others that you are feeling lonely.

Various organisations offer ‘befriending’ services where a volunteer will regularly visit an older person, or someone with a health problem, in their own home, or will phone them for a chat. The arrangement is based on friendship and there is no payment involved. The idea is that the volunteer befriender will get as much out of meeting the person in their home as the person does out of meeting the befriender.

Getting to know a new person who takes an interest in you and your life can improve your mood and confidence greatly, and make you feel listened to and part of the community again.