

‘Helping Hands’ campaign to put a spotlight on isolation

Horsham Matters, the local charity supporting those suffering from food and household poverty, has launched a campaign to recreate that pandemic community spirit and tackle the serious issue of isolation in Horsham District.

Their Hidden Poverty Survey investigating the effects of the cost-of-living crisis on residents, revealed that **isolation** is an issue with more than a third of respondents. The poll also showed that 22% of respondents did not have a friend or neighbour who they could rely on for help.

To tackle this, the charity has launched the Helping Hands campaign to encourage the community to ‘lend a helping hand’ to their neighbours, friends, and even strangers, to break down barriers to combat **isolation**, reduce stigma and encourage people to be able to talk to someone about how they are feeling.

Amalia Lovett, Network and Campaigns Lead for Horsham Matters, said, *“Our Hidden Poverty Survey highlighted the fact that not only the elderly are struggling with **isolation**. We spoke to many young mums and professionals who also felt that they had few social connections. Our campaign aims to bring back the community spirit, much like during the pandemic when checking in with our neighbours was the norm.”*

Studies show that social **isolation** significantly increases a person’s risk of premature death from all causes, a risk that may rival those of smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity.

The Helping Hands campaign will feature tips on how people can support those most vulnerable in their community. The charity wants to encourage residents to share their campaign and to promote initiatives that support activity in community spaces to promote social connection, such as community cafes, coffee mornings and village lunches.

Amalia points out that Helping Hands is about small steps we can all take. *"It can be small and easy gestures like saying 'hello', asking someone how their day is going... small steps that can help people feel less **isolated**. It's also important to encourage people to develop new relationships by volunteering with a local charity, or joining a local interest group."*

Also . . .

Horsham Matters runs a weekly Connecting Café on Tuesdays from 11:30 to 1:30 at St Andrews Methodist Church Methodist in Roffey. Everyone is welcome.

It's a pay it forward café, so if someone doesn't have funds to pay, they don't have to worry as they can have a free hot meal.



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