



Age Scotland January 2026 Newsletter



SOPA News

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The Age Scotland Health and Wellbeing Team

Can you be alone, but not lonely?

Research tells us that loneliness is [damaging for our health and wellbeing](#) and is an experience that can shape how we understand the world around us. Loneliness is now better understood as a public health issue as illustrated in the [Manifesto for Social Connection \(2025\)](#). Academics in the USA have been working on understand what helps people keep in good 'social health'. Writing in an article in [The Conversation](#), they suggest that on a personal level we might aim to:

- **Prioritise face-to-face time.** Even short, [in-person interactions boost mood](#), reduce stress and build trust.
- **Use technology actively, not passively.** Reach out to someone, schedule a video call or use apps to create opportunities for connection — not just to scroll.
- **Treat solitude as restoration, not failure.** Healthy social lives include both meaningful interaction and the downtime needed to recharge.
- **Build routines that create natural interaction.** Walk the same route daily, become a regular at neighbourhood spots or join recurring community activities to create predictable opportunities for connection.
- **And most importantly, take initiative.** In a culture that treats socialising as a luxury, prioritising connection is quietly radical.

On the idea of solitude as restoration, [recent research](#) has explored older people's experiences of being alone but not lonely; what they call 'positive solitude'. While the researchers are careful not to suggest we enforce solitude, they highlight the potential of 'positive solitude' as a way for people to manage feelings of loneliness or symptoms of depression. This may involve supporting individuals to develop ways of feeling more comfortable sitting with solitude. Likewise, the authors explain that being alone can be an important opportunity for people to explore their feelings.

After a December filled with social commitments (and obligations), some of us may relish the opportunity for positive solitude. It appears that finding the balance between togetherness and opportunities to be alone (and not lonely) is what we all might strive for.

Free training and resources from the Age Scotland Health and Wellbeing team

In March we're hosting two **Supporting older people to age well workshops**. These are for paid staff and volunteers in groups and services that support older people. The workshops will cover aspects of ageing are within individual control, how your group/service already contributes to the healthy ageing of its members/service users, resources and ideas for building on that contribution, and an opportunity to plan next steps. The workshop is delivered face-to-face.

Edinburgh: Tuesday 24th March, 1.30-4.30pm.

Glasgow: Tuesday 31st March, 1.30pm-4.30pm

[Events details and booking](#)

We're also offering online training paid staff and volunteers who would like to lead group strength and balance for older people sessions using Age Scotland's Body Boosting Bingo game. The training will take place **10am-11.30am on Monday 9th March.**

[Event details and booking](#)

Diving into something creative can keep your brain young

[Research](#) published this year has shown a link between creativity and having a 'younger' brain. The authors defined creativity as "the ability to produce ideas or solutions that are both novel and effective using one's imagination". Excitingly, this definition includes the arts but also allows for things that you might not have considered creative such as video games.

Through looking at 'brain clocks' (e.g. how old your brain is biologically, rather than the number on your birthday cake), the researchers found that brain ageing was delayed where creativity was practiced regularly. While there were benefits for all who engaged in creative activities, they found that the higher the level of expertise and performance, the greater the delay in brain age experienced by the participants.

This is great news for both beginners, people who are trying to expand their skillset, and people who are well-versed in a particular creative activity.

We know that [New Year's resolutions are far less effective](#) than building small daily habits into your life. So! Ask yourself, what is something creative that I can do – in the broadest sense of the word – this year? If you'd like to start by reading more about the power of creativity and art for our wellbeing, you might like to explore Professor Daisy Fancourt's new book [The Art Cure](#). Likewise, if you are part of a group you might like to consider ordering a [free 'Creativity Champions' pack](#) from the organisation [64 Million Artists](#), who have created a creativity challenge for the month of January 2026.

A recent [article in The Guardian](#) also looks at how simply visiting museums and galleries, or attending concerts, can provide a 'work out for the brain.'

Do you work with older people in a healthcare setting?

The British Geriatrics Society has a free self-paced e-learning course all about frailty in later life. It covers four topics: understanding and communicating frailty, identifying frailty, supporting people living with frailty, and building systems fit for frailty. You can access the course [here](#).

Eat well resources for different cultures

If you are part of, or work with, West African, East African, Caribbean, Bangladeshi, or Polish communities you might find the following Eatwell guides helpful:

- [Culturally adapted Eatwell guides](#), produced by Enfield Council
- [The South Asian Eatwell Guide](#) with full PDF guide [here](#), produced by MyNutriWeb

Would you like to start something new? Now is the time!

From laughter yoga to growing a vegetable, learning to tie knots to joining a [daytime disco online](#), learning or trying something new can benefit both your brain health and your sense of wellbeing. You might feel a sense of purpose, accomplishment, and hopefully have some fun as you attempt [something a little out of your comfort zone](#). To start something new, you can set yourself up for success by beginning with a [first small step](#) and recruit someone in your life (a colleague, neighbour, friend or family member) to share it with, or help you keep going.

