



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant

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UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID

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1. Research Title

An Investigation into the Impact of Loneliness on the Mental Wellbeing of Older Adults Living in Residential Care Homes in the UK

2. Introduction and Background/Rationale

Loneliness is a subjective feeling that may affect older adults' emotional and mental wellbeing. Moving into residential care can change familiar routines, relationships and independence, potentially increasing feelings of loneliness. A systematic review identified loneliness among older people living in residential and nursing care homes (Gardiner et al., 2020). Research on long-term-care settings has also examined links between loneliness, social isolation and poorer mental health outcomes (Lapane et al., 2022). Foundational work also distinguishes loneliness from social isolation and highlights their complex experience in later life (Victor, Scambler and Bond, 2009). This project will investigate how loneliness affects mental wellbeing in UK residential care homes.

3. Research Aim

The aim of this research is to investigate how loneliness affects the mental wellbeing of older adults living in residential care homes in the UK. The study will examine the nature and causes of loneliness, explore current evidence on its impact on mental wellbeing, identify key themes through thematic analysis, and develop practical recommendations for residential care home staff and managers to help reduce loneliness and promote the wellbeing of older residents.

4. Research Objectives

1. To define and examine loneliness and its impact on the mental wellbeing of older adults living in residential care homes in the UK.
2. To analyse current literature and evidence relating to loneliness and the mental wellbeing of older adults living in residential care homes in the UK.
3. To evaluate findings and themes through thematic analysis to identify key factors associated with loneliness and its impact on the mental wellbeing of older adults.
4. To provide specific recommendations for residential care home staff and managers to help reduce loneliness and support the mental wellbeing of older adults.

5. Methodology

Research Design

This project will use qualitative secondary research through a structured review of published literature. No primary data will be collected.

Search Strategy

CINAHL, MEDLINE, PubMed and PsycINFO will be searched, with Google Scholar used to identify additional studies. Keywords will include “loneliness”, “social isolation”, “older adults”, “residential care homes”, “mental wellbeing” and “UK”. Search results and selection decisions will be recorded.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The review will priorities English-language studies published between 2016 and 2026 involving adults aged 65 and over in residential or nursing homes, as well as other relevant research that directly addresses the study’s aim and objectives. Studies examining loneliness, social isolation and mental wellbeing will be included. Duplicates, irrelevant studies and sources lacking credible evidence will be excluded.

Quality Assessment and Analysis

Sources will be assessed using the CRAAP approach: Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy and Purpose. Thematic analysis will identify recurring themes relating to loneliness, contributing factors, mental wellbeing outcomes and support strategies.

6. Ethical Considerations

This study will adhere to the University of Wales Trinity Saint David’s Research Ethics and Integrity Policy, ensuring academic integrity, honesty and transparency (UWTSD, 2025–2026). All sources will be accurately cited and appropriately paraphrased to avoid plagiarism. Evidence will be reported objectively and faithfully, acknowledging relevant limitations. As the study relies exclusively on secondary sources, no primary participants will be recruited, and no identifiable personal data will be collected.

7. Resources

Resources will include a computer, internet access, UWTSD Library databases and staff support, journal articles, relevant UK reports, Moodle guidance, Microsoft Word and a source-tracking table. Lecturer feedback, Study Skills support and appropriate peer study support will help develop critical analysis, thematic analysis and referencing.

8. Time Horizon

Week	Planned activities	Expected output
1–2	Finalise proposal title, aim and objectives; incorporate tutor feedback.	Final proposal
3–4	Plan search terms, select databases and establish inclusion and exclusion criteria.	Chapter 3: Methods
5–6	Search databases, record results, remove duplicates and screen titles and abstracts.	Chapter 2: Literature Review
7–8	Retrieve full texts, apply criteria, assess source quality using CRAAP and draft the introduction.	Chapters 1 and 2
9–10	Revise Chapter 1 and review literature on loneliness in residential care.	Chapters 1 and 2
11–12	Review mental wellbeing literature, compare studies critically and identify research gaps.	Chapter 2 draft
13–14	Complete the literature review, citations, research design, databases and search strategy.	Chapters 2 and 3
15–16	Finalise eligibility criteria, validation, thematic analysis, ethics and methodology.	Completed Chapter 3
17–18	Prepare and present the Academic Methods Poster; record feedback.	Poster and feedback
19–20	Organise the source table, code findings and identify emerging patterns.	Organised research findings
21–22	Group codes into themes and draft findings and thematic analysis.	Chapter 4 draft

23– 24	Discuss findings and limitations; develop recommendations and conclusions.	Chapters 4 and 5 drafts
25– 27	Incorporate feedback, revise chapters, proofread, check references and complete final checks.	Final submission

9. Self-Reflection

The researcher identifies organisation, commitment and willingness to learn as strengths. Further confidence is needed in critical appraisal and thematic analysis. These skills will be developed through lecturer feedback, UWTSD Library and Study Skills support, source tracking, and practice coding findings into themes. Regular progress reviews will help manage workload and meet deadlines.

10. References

1. Gardiner, C., Laud, P., Heaton, T. and Gott, M. (2020) 'What is the prevalence of loneliness amongst older people living in residential and nursing care homes? A systematic review and meta-analysis', *Age and Ageing*, 49(5), pp. 748–757. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ageing/afaa049>.
2. Lapane, K.L., Lim, E., McPhillips, E., Barooah, A., Yuan, Y. and Dubé, C.E. (2022) 'Health effects of loneliness and social isolation in older adults living in congregate long term care settings: A systematic review of quantitative and qualitative evidence', *Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics*, 102, 104728. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.archger.2022.104728>.
3. Victor, C., Scambler, S. and Bond, J. (2009) *The Social World of Older People: Understanding Loneliness and Social Isolation in Later Life*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
4. University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD), *Research Ethics and Integrity Policy 2025–2026*. Available from the [University's Research Integrity and Ethics webpage](#)