

Lonely fall victim to con artists

By Vicky Shaw

PEOPLE who feel lonely are more likely to be a victim of fraud, research suggests.

Nearly one in six suffered loneliness in the pandemic, having little or no contact with friends or family.

A study says that 25 per cent who were lonely or faced social isolation at least once a week had been a victim of fraud.

Of those conned, eight per cent were taken in by a romance scam.

But the survey found that 12 per cent who suspected the motives of the person they were chatting to online would not end the conversation.

Ed Fisher, head of anti-fraud policy at Nationwide Building Society, said: "People looking for love need to protect their wallet as well as their hearts by looking out for any warning signs, doing their own background checks and talking about their relationships with friends and family."

I can see Mum every day!



Relative comfort... Hilda, 102, can now be visited by Lynn, below right

Daughter's joy, but campaign group says many families are still denied care homes visits

A WOMAN banned from visiting her blind, 102-year-old mother at her care home thanked the Daily Express yesterday after finally getting access. Distraught Lynn Embleton was put on anti-depressants after she was refused essential care giver status - every resident's right - to visit Hilda Drake during Covid.

She missed her birthday on December 23, Christmas and New Year and last saw her on January 2.

And heartbreakingly, former nurse Hilda told Lynn she was a "prisoner" and "wanted to die".

But after the Daily Express intervened last week, the care home's bosses in Worksop, Notts, relented.

They granted essential care giver status to Lynn and will do the same for relatives in all seven homes they run.

Overjoyed Lynn, 72, said: "I can see Mum every day now. I am so grateful to you and [campaign group] Rights for Residents."

But tens of thousands of families are still fighting for access as regulator the Care Quality Commission and the Department of Health and Social Care bicker over who is responsible.

Campaigners say that homes use Covid outbreaks to limit visiting, despite care minister Gillian Keegan insisting this should happen

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only if the care giver tests positive. The Care Quality Commission said it would take "swift and appropriate regulatory and enforcement actions" to ensure residents receive visitors.

From December 1, the watchdog received 189 concerns from families, 82 of which were claims of blanket bans. But the true scale of the crisis is thought to be much deeper because many keep quiet, fearing loved ones would be evicted.

Ms Keegan is "satisfied" the CQC has sufficient powers, but conceded some providers were still denying families their right to a visit.

She said the Daily Express had "campaigning valiantly" and added: "Our statistics suggest in the majority of cases this [visits] is happening, but I cannot ignore the fact some people are not being able to see loved ones."

The Department of Health will not say how many homes have a Covid outbreak, as data is "unpublished or experimental".

Campaign group Rights for Residents called it a "shocking abuse of human rights", adding: "The ongoing mantra from DHSC shows complete lack of empathy and is an insult to thousands of distressed residents still prevented from seeing their loved ones."

Helen Wildbore, of the Relatives & Residents Association charity, called the blame game between the Government and CQC "abhorrent".

Rules review... care minister Gillian Keegan



NS&I interest rate changes



→ Higher variable interest rates on Income Bonds and Direct Saver

On 10 February 2022 NS&I changed the interest rates on the following accounts:

Variable gross rates

NS&I account	Minimum balance	Previous rate	New rate from 10 February 2022
Income Bonds	£500	0.35% gross/AER	0.50% gross/AER
Direct Saver	£1	0.35% gross/AER	0.50% gross/AER

Definitions

AER (Annual Equivalent Rate) illustrates what the annual rate of interest would be if the interest was compounded each time it was paid. Where interest is paid annually, the quoted rate and the AER are the same.

Gross is the taxable rate of interest without the deduction of UK Income Tax.

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Covid test demands 'have left staff at breaking point'

A COMPANY that developed a portable kit to identify Covid in just 30 minutes said the demands of testing had pushed care homes to "breaking point".

Analysis by Newcastle-based QuantuMDx said two in three care home staff were considering quitting.

One in three managers fears their home will be forced to close unless staffing issues improve.

The slowness of lab-based testing continues to have a major impact. Some people are waiting up to four days for test results, according to the survey. Jonathan O'Halloran, chief executive of QuantuMDx, said: "Increased visitor numbers

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will also add to the strain on care homes and their staff. Our survey shows most homes want testing to happen faster, and closer to the point of need."

The Daily Express was the first to reveal the capacity of the handheld device to rapidly detect infectious diseases.

QuantuMDx, which has been endorsed by Boris Johnson, developed the Q-POC to identify Covid, ebola, HIV, bird flu and other infectious diseases. The kit could become a significant tool in the fight against future virus threats.



Poll... Jonathan O'Halloran