When the Pandemic “hit” how quickly everything changed for us all? Whether or not you saw the lockdown coming or were completely shocked at the speed with which the day to day foundations of our normal lives (going to work, leaving your home, seeing your loved ones) were changed. It was unlike anything in our living memory. Initially we all thought “this won’t last” “A few weeks or months at the most” And yet, here we are a year on. From this position it’s hard to see how things could ever be the same again. This state has been our “new normal” for so long.

For many, this has been a time of loneliness, frustration and often grief, as we are unable to process anything the way we traditionally would. The end of lockdown is not so much anticipated as craved. "When things begin to ease up," we said to ourselves, "when I can do this/that again" etc However now that time has come and we begin to get prepared to re-enter the world, it feels less like a loud celebration and more like coming out of hibernation and carefully testing how it will be. No matter how isolated we may have been, we still won’t be able to hug, hold gatherings any larger than six (unless under specific circumstances) or share indoor space in any meaningful way for some time to come. We see social distancing and the wearing of masks continuing for the foreseeable future.

That sense of caution is just one of the many reasons why the way out of lockdown will make the loneliness and isolation worse, not better. And it’s important to hold space for those who are struggling, or even unable to follow the path out. We have become used to the way things are now and we are being asked to change again and for many this will be extremely challenging. Part of that is to do with just how confusing the way out will be.

Researchers at the University of Sussex found that the proportion of mothers responsible for 90 to 100% of childcare increased from 27% to 45% during lockdown. As restrictions ease, there are mothers who remain isolated in their childrearing role while their partners return to a form of normality.

Physical and geographical isolation is another major factor. As Kayleigh Dray pointed, “unless you live within walking distance of your friends, have access to a car or feel ready to brave public transport again, the bubbles suggested by the government mean little”

Then there’s the psychological impact. There are many mental health conditions, from health anxiety to OCD, which find thrive and live off routine and control. Leaving those spheres of control without clear measured guidelines is intimidating and anxiety-inducing.

For many, lockdown has given people a sense of containment that it’s okay not to want to go out and not to want to do this. [In their mind they think], ‘I feel safe, and I don’t want to feel unsafe. And when I see people who are all hugging each other and saying, "I’m so happy to see you", I can’t do that.” This leaves you with the sense of being on the outside looking in or, more accurately, on the inside looking out, as friends, loved ones and strangers embrace the lifting of lockdown with seemingly no worry.

Think of those with illnesses that don’t allow them to go out much and how this is for them usually as this is their norm. As we come out of lockdown, we may have gained some understanding of what that isolation
can be like, it’s a chance to work towards a society that doesn’t isolate some for the sake of others. It is a chance to do differently moving forward

It is time to assess how things for you were before the pandemic, how you have been during it and what things may look like for you as we move forward

You may not have enjoyed the process, that said, how we have lived for the past year is beginning to change and so it is an opportunity to reflect on any learning and make a plan to “return to the world”

It is important to reach out to people if you are struggling, to try to explain how you are feeling about yet another change.

Isolation still may be a concern of yours as the lockdown begins to ease, perhaps because of fear, or anxiety about what may be out there. We had no choice throughout the lockdown. Perhaps we now have a greater choice and some control over our lives again

We will explore some of these and discuss this topic in more detail during the ‘Isolation after lockdown eases’ webinar on **Tuesday 30th March 2021 at 12pm**. You can register to join the webinar at:

[https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2356957519438658064](https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2356957519438658064)

If you are unable to join the webinar live, a recording of the session can be accessed using the same link above after the webinar has taken place.

If you feel you may need some support, you can also contact Care first. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. All employees are eligible to use Care first, our services include; telephone counselling, information services and online support. Call Care first on the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.