

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 FRIDAY 2 DECEMBER 2016

LAUGHTER REALLY COULD BE THE BEST MEDICINE. NEW RESEARCH REVEALS THAT OVER HALF OF ALL LONELY OLDER PEOPLE SIMPLY MISS HAVING SOMEONE TO LAUGH WITH.

- Survey of lonely over 65s reveals what they miss most
- Simply 'sitting with someone' comes out on top of most missed (52%)
- 'Laughing with someone' is second at 51 per cent
- One million older people suffer with chronic loneliness in the UK
- Campaign to End Loneliness calls for action to tackle chronic loneliness

Over 1 million older people in the UK suffer chronic loneliness, a condition which increases likelihood of an early death by 26%. A new survey of lonely people 65 years-old and older by the Campaign to End Loneliness, found that, of all possible experiences, simply being together with someone is missed most of all (52%), closely followed by laughing with another person (51%). Meanwhile 46% miss having a hug.

The research revealed that older people experiencing loneliness miss simple 'everyday' moments, such as sharing a meal (35%), holding hands (30%), taking country walks (32%) or going on holiday (44%).

Almost one in five (17%) identified having a drink at the pub as something they longed to do.

Factors that can contribute to chronic loneliness, such as bereavement, disability, poor health and lack of transport, often converge in later life, making it harder for people to participate in activities they enjoy. Respondents to the poll mentioned loss of confidence, ill health, disability and sensory loss as barriers to participation.

Laura Alcock-Ferguson, Director of the Campaign to End Loneliness, said:

"Meaningful social connections are essential for human happiness. At the Campaign, we want to make loneliness everyone's business and show that we can all play a role in combatting loneliness in their community, whether as an organisation or an individual.

"At a national level, we're calling for the development of a UK-wide strategy for tackling loneliness and social isolation to help end this growing crisis. Health and wellbeing boards also have a big role to play, and it is vital that every board in the country put in place a clear action plan with measurable targets for reducing loneliness in their local population."

Jim, 87, from Manchester, said: *"Loneliness is like a heavy cloud hanging over you. I had long periods of isolation. The loneliness crept up on me and I became depressed, which made matters worse. When you're on your own you forget how to talk to people.*

"Since then, I've moved into a wonderful housing community with Northwards Housing. Having someone to talk to – just small unimportant things - makes all the difference in the world."

To find out more about the Campaign to End Loneliness visit www.campaigntoendloneliness.org

Ends

TOP 10 EXPERIENCES LONELY OLDER PEOPLE MISS MOST	
Sitting next to someone and just being together	52%
Laughing with someone	51%
Hugging someone	46%
Eating a meal with someone	35%
Someone to share a bed with	31%
Holding hands with someone	30%
Having Sunday lunch with the family	17%
Spending time with children	13%
Looking after somebody	12%
Cooking for family or friends	7%

TOP 10 ACTIVITIES LONELY OLDER PEOPLE MISS MOST	
Going on holidays	44%
Going for country walks	32%
Socialising outside the home	31%
Going to restaurants	26%
Going to the pub	17%
Entertaining guests	16%
Going dancing	14%
Playing games	13%
Office gossip	12%
Exercising	9%

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

For all media enquiries, including case study requests, contact

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Campaign to End Loneliness

The Campaign to End Loneliness inspires thousands of organisations and people to do more to tackle the health threat of loneliness in older age through community action, good practice and evidence. Age UK Oxfordshire, Independent Age, Manchester City Council, Royal Voluntary Service and Sense provide governance and strategic direction for Campaign.

Make a donation to support the Campaign at www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk

More information can be found at www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk

Key loneliness facts:

- Over a million people in the UK feel chronically lonely, that is all or most of the time
- Loneliness and isolation in older age is a serious public health issue and increases the risk of conditions including dementia (James et al, 2011), high blood pressure (Hawkley et al, 2010) and depression (Cacioppo et al, 2006) (Green et al, 1992).
- Loneliness increases the demand on health services: academic research shows that those experiencing loneliness are more likely to use accident and emergency services (Geller, Janson, McGovern and Valdini, 1999), visit their GP (Gerst-Emerson, Jayawardhana 2014), and have higher use of medication (Cohen, 2006)
- 76% GPs report 1-5 patients a day come to their surgery because they are lonely

What can people do to tackle their loneliness?

- It is important to know that there will be people and organisations in your local area that would love to hear from you. You might consider taking up a new activity, volunteering, or simple talking to someone about how you are feeling can help. This could be a GP, a friend or calling a helpline. There are a number of helplines, including [The Silver Line](#) 24 hours a day offering support for anyone aged 55 or over, the [Calm Zone](#) (for men), [SupportLine](#) (which is for all people, of all ages).

What can we all do to help support people who are lonely?

- We would encourage anyone who wants to help to sign up as a supporter to the Campaign to End Loneliness by visiting www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk
- We can also play a role in supporting local older people avoid loneliness, for example by offering help with transport to get out and about, support with using the internet to help stay connected with friends and family, or letting them know about social activities going on in their local area.
- You could volunteer for a charity that directly supports older people who might be lonely, such as [Independent Age](#), [Royal Voluntary Service](#) or [Sense](#). Alternatively, check out the [Do-it](#) website for hundreds of volunteering opportunities near you.

Northwards Housing

Northwards Housing is an Arms Length Management Organisation looking after 13,500 council homes in north Manchester. Over 3,500 of their tenants are aged 65+ so they launched a campaign designed to combat loneliness and isolation amongst older people. Retired Not Expired celebrates the region's pluckiest pensioners in a bid to inspire others to try something new.

Jim Giles is a resident with Northwards Housing. Since his move, Jim has been able to develop his talents as an artist, and is living proof that we are never too old to learn and develop. He started an MA in Fine art at the age of 80 at Salford University.

www.northwardshousing.co.uk

Survey

The survey was conducted by Censuswide on behalf of the Campaign to End Loneliness. Censuswide surveyed 1,002 lonely 65+ year olds across the UK.

For a breakdown of the data please contact Miriam@campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk

For further information about Censuswide email info@censuswide.com or call 020 7251 9955