



NEWS RELEASE

Immediate release

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HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS FOR HUMAN CONTACT MUST BE TACKLED TO AVOID FURTHER HEALTH COSTS

The Campaign to End Loneliness is concerned by the evidence of low levels of human contact available for older people as reported by Equality and Human Rights Commission publication today.

With care workers providing the main daily contact for many of the people they visit, it is vital that they have time to provide adequate social contact not just meet physical needs. At the very least they should be able to identify and refer those who are isolated and lonely on to specific support networks.

Laura Ferguson, Director of the Campaign to End Loneliness emphasised the need to consider preventing loneliness as a step that can prevent further health complications: "Being at home alone for increasingly long periods during the day is a risk factor in becoming more isolated and lonely and yet this is the reality for older people. Quite simply, if you are lonely over time you are more likely to become ill. Care workers must be supported to identify and refer those who are suffering from loneliness. This simply and cost effective measure is likely to reduce the vulnerability of older people and hospital readmissions".

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the Campaign

The Campaign to End Loneliness aims to maintain and create connections in older age and was started in 2010 by four founder partners: Age UK Oxfordshire, Counsel and Care, Independent Age and WRVS. It is funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. More information can be found at: www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk

Loneliness is bad for your health. Researchers rate loneliness and social isolation as a higher risk than lifelong smoking (Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB (2010) 'Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review', PLoS Med 7(7): e1000316). It is closely associated with depression and it has been shown that loneliness makes it harder to regulate behaviour, rendering people more likely to drink excessively, have healthier diets or take less exercise.

Being at home alone for increasingly long periods during the day is identified as a risk factor in becoming more isolated and lonely over time – from Wenger, GC and Burholt, V (2004).

Changes in levels of social isolation and loneliness among older people in a rural area: a twenty-year longitudinal study. Canadian Journal on Aging, 23(2): 115–27

12 per cent of older people feel trapped in their own home - GfK/NOP Help Unite Generations (hug) survey for Help the Aged, 2005

Half of all older people (about 5 million) say that the television is their main form of company - ICM Research survey (2009) for One Voice: shaping our ageing society, Age Concern and Help the Aged

These statistics and research into loneliness in older age were set out alongside a call to action by the Campaign to End Loneliness in the 2011 report Safeguarding the Convoy – A call to action from the Campaign to End Loneliness. For a copy, contact

laura@campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk

The four founder members recognise the importance of working together and with others to end loneliness: a complex, very personal and often hidden issue which has knock on effects across health and wider society. These organisations are:

Counsel and Care is a national charity working with older people, their families and carers to get the best care and support. VitalLinks is Counsel and Care's new national network of befriending schemes for older people that aims to help older people, their families and carers to locate a nearby scheme and assists befriending schemes to connect with each other. The goal is to reduce loneliness and isolation by raising the profile of befriending for older people and filling the gaps in provision across England and Wales. For more information visit www.counselandcare.org.uk/vital-links or contact the VitalLinks coordinator, Kathleen Gillett, on 0207 241 8535 or email VitalLinks@counselandcare.org.uk

Independent Age is unique in providing lifelong support to older people on very low incomes. We provide information and advice, practical help and emergency financial aid through our network of staff and dedicated volunteers across the UK and Republic of Ireland. Just as importantly, we offer friendship and the chance to socialise to those who are lonely and isolated. Supported by Independent Age, thousands of older people are able to maintain their independence, contribute to their communities and enjoy a good quality of life, secure in the knowledge that our help lasts as long as they need it. To find out about volunteering with Independent Age visit www.independentage.org.uk/volunteer

WRVS provides practical help through the power of volunteering, so older people can stay independent and live the way they want. WRVS is one of the largest volunteering charities in Britain powered by 45,000 volunteers who regularly provide practical help to over 100,000 older people in their homes, communities, hospitals and during emergencies. To find out about volunteering with WRVS visit www.wrvs.org.uk

Age UK Oxfordshire is an independent local charity with over 40 years of experience in promoting the well-being of older people throughout the county of Oxfordshire, and helping to make later life a fulfilling and enjoyable experience. To find out about volunteering with Age UK Oxfordshire visit www.ageconcernoxon.org.uk/volunteering.htm

The Campaign is supported by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, which is an international charitable foundation with cultural, educational, scientific and social interests. Based in Lisbon with offices in London and Paris, the Foundation is in a privileged position to support national and transnational work tackling contemporary issues. The purpose of the UK Branch in London is to connect and enrich the experiences of individuals, families and communities, with a special interest in supporting those who are most disadvantaged. It currently focuses its work on developing and supporting innovative projects and partnerships across the themes of cultural understanding, fulfilling potential, environment and maximising social and cultural value. www.gulbenkian.org.uk