

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **One in five lonely people have no one to turn to**

One in five people aged 60 and over who experience loneliness say they have no one to turn to, according to a new poll published today.

The Campaign to End Loneliness, who published the survey is [warning](#) that loneliness and isolation are as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and is calling on local authorities to take the lead on reducing and preventing loneliness in their local areas.

The organisation says a range of support is needed to overcome the ‘many triggers’ of loneliness faced in older age. The Campaign states that the support needed should include transport and technology – with 41 per cent of those who feel lonely saying transport is a barrier to seeing people, and half (51%) of older people polled believing the internet can help prevent loneliness.

The Campaign have launched new online [guidance](#) advising local authorities of the essential services that are needed to support older people, like local transport provided by a charity supporter of the Campaign, [Contact the Elderly](#).

Maud, aged 90 from South London experienced loneliness and depression because she had difficulties with her mobility and struggled to leave her second floor flat. She was helped by [Contact the Elderly](#) who provide volunteers to drive older people to monthly Sunday tea parties. “I was so lonely after my best friend Margie died. I never married or had any children so I found myself completely alone, and I got very depressed. Sometimes I won’t speak to another person all weekend, and Sundays can be particularly lonely.

“It’s a miracle that my driver comes to my door and gives me a helping hand down the stairs, and brings me safely home again afterwards. I feel lucky to be part of Contact the Elderly and I’ve made so many friends.”

**Laura Alcock-Ferguson**, Director for the Campaign to End Loneliness, says: “It is very sad to know that one in five who feel lonely in older age have no one to turn to. Local authorities are currently making crucial decisions about their services and need to recognise the potentially devastating impact that these changes, even in areas like transport may have on an older person’s ability to stay in touch with their friends, family and neighbours.

“We need local authorities to address the many triggers of loneliness by maintaining and providing essential services that older people rely on to stay connected. This could be transport to help with shopping, support with getting online, or simply, by providing clear information about social activities happening in their area.

“Our new [online guidance](#) showcases many examples of committed local authorities who recognise this and we urge all Councils across the country to help prevent these devastating consequences of loneliness in later life”.

Last year, Stoke-on-Trent joined the World Health Organisation’s Global Network of [Age Friendly Cities and Communities](#) in recognition of their commitment to making their City a great place in which to grow older and made ending loneliness a [top priority](#).

**Kate Edwards, Health Improvement Manager at Stoke-on-Trent City Council says:** “Loneliness and isolation is an important public health issue and we want to address loneliness in our local population to promote the wellbeing and quality of life of our older population in particular, which may help reduce demand on hospitals and social care services.

“The Campaign to End Loneliness’ new online guidance is an excellent tool, reminding local authorities that there is no one cause of loneliness and no one cure. It will support our on-going commitment to working with our partners including charities, public services and local businesses to help older people maintain their social connections and independence.”

**-ENDS-**

## NOTES TO EDITORS

[1] 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. More information can be found at [www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk](http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk)

[2] The poll was conducted by [Survation](#) with 1,254 people aged 60 and over in the UK and showed:

- 20% of respondents who said they felt lonely disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “I feel that I have someone to turn to when I feel lonely”
- 41% of respondents who said they felt lonely agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “I find that transport is a barrier to me seeing people”
- 51% of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “I think using the internet can prevent older people from being lonely”

[3] [Survation](#) is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules

[4] Key loneliness facts:

- Over a [million people in the UK](#) feel chronically lonely, that is all or most of the time
- Loneliness and isolation [increases the risk of conditions](#) including dementia, high blood pressure and depression.
- Lonely individuals [visit their GP more often, have a higher incidence of falls, and enter residential care sooner.](#)