**Embargoed: Wednesday 20 January 2016**

**Campaign to End Loneliness Unites Experts for Symposium on Loneliness**

The Campaign to End Loneliness, in partnership with Ageing Well in Wales, brought together over 150 people across from the UK on 20 January, to share and discuss new research and solutions to tackling chronic loneliness in older age.

Highlights of the event, held at Cardiff City Hall, included:

* Keynote presentation *Making Research Matter* by Professor Vanessa Burholt, Professor of Gerontology in the College of Human and Health Sciences, Swansea University
* Interactive sessions on the report *Promising Approaches to reducing loneliness and isolation in Wales*
* Presentations from *Let’s End Going Home Alone, Community Transport Association Wales, Men’s Sheds Cymru, Spice Innovations and Gwanwyn Festival.*

Dr. Kellie Payne, Learning and Research Manager and coordinator of the Learning Network at the Campaign to End Loneliness, said:

“Loneliness is fast becoming one of society’s major issues affecting 1 million people over 65 today. The Conference brought together those working to address loneliness in older age to share new ideas, successes and challenges. Discussions focussed on learning from both research and practice, and provided a place to connect with like-minded organisations, in order to inspire further action across the UK to combat loneliness in older age.”

Steve Huxton, Network Coordinator for Ageing Well in Wales, said:

“It’s great to be co-hosting this conference with Campaign to End Loneliness in Wales, and to meet with so many people who recognise the impact that loneliness has on the wellbeing of older people. We are working together with partners from around Wales and beyond to ensure that loneliness is recognised as a public health issue, and we do all that can be done to reduce its impact.”

Wales’ Health and Social Services Minister, Professor Mark Drakeford said:

“We want to ensure people of all ages experience sustained improvement to their mental health and well-being, and the new Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan for 2016-19 sets out our priorities to do this. One key priority is to reduce loneliness and isolation among older people. I encourage people to get involved in the consultation process.”

Professor Vanessa Burholt, Professor of Gerontology in the College of Human and Health Sciences at Swansea University, said:

“This is a great opportunity for our research conducted in Wales to have an impact on the older people living in the Principality. I will be explaining to participants how we can tackle loneliness in for older people in Wales by making changed to the environment and to our social and cultural values that exclude some people from full participation in society.”

The Campaign to End Loneliness is a network of national, regional and local organisations and individuals working together through community action, good practice, research, advocacy and policy to create the right conditions to reduce loneliness in later life.

The Campaign was launched in 2011, is led by five partner organisations, Age UK Oxfordshire, Independent Age, Manchester City Council, Royal Voluntary Service and Sense, and works alongside more than 2,000 supporters to tackle loneliness in older age. Thus far the Campaign’s work has been funded by Founder Funder the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Independent Age, the John Ellerman Foundation, the Tudor Trust and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

**-ENDS-**

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

The Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan for 2016-19 can be found here: <http://gov.wales/consultations/healthsocialcare/delivery-plan/?status=open&lang=en>

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

Key loneliness facts:

* Over a [million people in the UK](http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/blog/latest-statistics-over-a-million-lonely-older-people-in-the-united-kingdom/) feel chronically lonely, that is all or most of the time
* Loneliness and isolation in older age is a [serious public health issue](http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/threat-to-health/) and increases the risk of conditions including dementia ([James et al, 2011](http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/references/)), high blood pressure ([Hawkley et al, 2010](http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/references/)) and depression ([Cacioppo et al, 2006](http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/references/)) ([Green et al, 1992](http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/references/)).
* Loneliness increases the demand on health services: academic research shows that those experiencing loneliness are [more likely](http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/threat-to-health/) to use accident and emergency services ([Geller, Janson, McGovern and Valdini, 1999](http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/references/)) , visit their GP ([Gerst-Emerson, Jayawardhana 2014](http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2014.302427?journalCode=ajph)), and have higher use of medication ([Cohen, 2006](http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/references/))
* [76% GPs report](http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/11/FINAL-GP-Polling-PR-15.11.13.pdf) 1-5 patients a day come to their surgery because they are lonely