

News Release

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Contact: Jack Neill-Hall on 020 7012 1411 or out of hours on 07787 405 271

Web training not silver bullet for loneliness

Think tank Policy Exchange has called for every person in the UK to be taught basic digital skills as a way of addressing loneliness among the over 65s.

Loneliness has been established as a major threat to public health, with over a million older people in the UK thought to be lonely all or most of the time, and researchers finding it linked with a wide range of health conditions including heart disease and early onset dementia.

Responding to a call by think tank Policy Exchange to spend £875m by 2020 to train 6.2 million people without basic digital skills, in order to address loneliness, **Kate Jopling**, Director for the Campaign to End Loneliness, says:

“Without question there are huge benefits to providing free training for older people to enable them to make better use of technology and the internet – but the evidence that this alone can address loneliness is not very strong. For most people we find that it is face to face contact that really makes a difference.

“It is important to remember that each person is different and to help everyone we will need a range of solutions. Web training can be one of these solutions – although it may be the classes themselves, and not the skills learned in them, that really make the biggest impact on loneliness.

“We welcome the fact ministers, local government and health chiefs are all becoming more aware that loneliness is a problem they can no longer ignore. It is important that we invest now to prevent future health issues developing as loneliness is often the first step on the path to poor mental and physical health.”

Ends

NOTES TO EDITORS

The **Campaign to End Loneliness** is network of local, regional and national organisations and individuals working together through community action, good practice, policy and research to combat loneliness and isolation in the United Kingdom.

Anyone can make their voice heard in their own area by letting their local health and wellbeing board know about the problem of loneliness and isolation – more information is available on our website:

<http://bit.ly/1amMJCX>

The Campaign has five partners who lead the strategic direction of the Campaign: **Age UK Oxfordshire, Independent Age, Manchester City Council, Royal Voluntary Service** and **Sense**. More information about the Campaign can be found at: www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk