



NEWS RELEASE

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Last chance to take responsibility to combat loneliness this Christmas

With only days before the last Royal Mail posting date for Christmas, the Campaign to End Loneliness is calling on us all to reach out to older neighbours or family who might be isolated or lonely over Christmas.

A YouGov survey carried out for the charity Independent Age found that only 25% of 2,070 British adults thought they had responsibility to keep in touch with older neighbours who might be lonely.

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

“Keeping in touch with older neighbours and family could help them overcome the extra emotional pressures of Christmas. Memories of past friends and Christmases can make the festive season particularly painful for older people who are isolated and lonely.

Isolation has been linked to health problems and is an indicator of early death but we can all do something about it. Simply sending a Christmas card, giving a gift to or spending time with an older neighbour or family member might help lift them out of their isolation and loneliness. We can all take one small step to connect with someone who might be feeling lonely.”

There are more things people can do to help reduce loneliness felt by older people. This Christmas, many of the Campaign’s partner organisations are working across the country to ensure that older people can receive the support they need to not be lonely.

Taking action can be as simple as donating to a Christmas lunch run by someone like Friends of the Elderly or volunteering to give lifts to a carol concert, as needed by the Link Visiting Scheme in Wokingham.

For more information and examples of groups across the country working to combat loneliness, please visit: www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk/christmas-2011

-ENDS-

About the poll: All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,070 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 15th and 17th December 2010. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

About the case studies: The Campaign to End Loneliness invited its 92 supporter organisations to let us know what they were doing this Christmas to prevent or alleviate loneliness in their community. Information from a selection of those that replied is now displayed on our website, to provide inspiration and ideas for other organisations or individuals across the United Kingdom. www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk/christmas-2011

About loneliness and health: Loneliness is bad for your health: researchers rate loneliness and social isolation as a comparable risk to mortality as lifelong smoking (Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB (2010) 'Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review', PLoS Med 7(7): e1000316).

Background to the Campaign to End Loneliness

About the Campaign:

The Campaign to End Loneliness aims to maintain and create connections in older age and was launched in 2011 by four founder partners: Age UK Oxfordshire, Counsel and Care, Independent Age and WRVS. It is funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

The Campaign recently released the results from its baseline survey. *Listening to You: the baseline report from the Campaign to End Loneliness* contains the responses of over 1,500 adults aged 40+ on loneliness and can be found on our [website](#).

Three upcoming pieces of work by the Campaign will pursue the theme of working together to combat loneliness in local areas:

1. In February 2012, with the Local Government Association's Ageing Well Programme, we will create and promote a briefing sheet for local authorities on what can be done in local areas to tackle the loneliness that is experienced by many older people.
2. A local project focusing on health and wellbeing interventions to combat loneliness will be launched in 2012.
3. A corresponding "guide" to reducing loneliness in older age will be created with and for those working with older people.

More information about the Campaign can be found at:

www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk

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

Independent Age is a unique and growing charity, providing information, advice and support for thousands of older people across the UK and the Republic of Ireland. It has recently merged with two other older people's charities, *Counsel and Care* and *Universal Beneficent Society*, to provide a broader range of services than any of the charities could provide separately. The merged charity, which is called Independent Age, provides:

- An information and advice service for older people, their families and carers, focusing on three vital areas:
 - Social care, including care at home, in hospital and residential care
 - Welfare benefits
 - Befriending services and other social support.

This national information and advice is integrated with:

- Local support, including:
 - Practical help with forms, assessments and other issues

- One to one and group befriending schemes

We use the knowledge we gain from providing our services to help influence policy and practice. For more information visit www.independentage.org

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 more visit <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire/>

The Campaign is supported by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, which is an international charitable foundation with cultural, educational, social and scientific interests. Based in Lisbon with branches in London and Paris, the Foundation is in a privileged position to support transnational work tackling contemporary issues in Europe. 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. In 2008, the Foundation launched an initiative on ageing and social cohesion. Our support of the Campaign to End Loneliness represents a core development of our work in this area which we hope will contribute to a growing understanding of the impact of demographic ageing on our society. For more information about the work of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in the UK please visit www.gulbenkian.org.uk