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New money to fight loneliness across England

15 local authorities across England are to be given new cash to fight loneliness, but campaigners warn that many others areas are looking to cut much needed support for lonely people.

The Campaign to End Loneliness has welcomed a [Big Lottery Fund announcement](#) detailing the 15 areas to receive Ageing Better grants to help combat loneliness and isolation [1].

Loneliness and isolation has been shown to have a similar effect on health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day [2] and it is hoped the Big Lottery Fund grants, worth between £2.5 million and £10 million will help the successful local partnerships make a real difference to the lives of lonely older people.

This is particularly important: at a recent Campaign to End Loneliness Summit in the North West, many of the service providers and commissioners present said that funding constraints were leading to an uncertain future for much of their work on loneliness.

Laura Ferguson, Director for the Campaign to End Loneliness, says: “There is a broad consensus that loneliness is a major public health issue, with lonely people much more likely to experience conditions requiring health or social care support. This is why the Ageing Better investment is so important – this area badly needs urgent and major investment.

“The £82 million fund will make a huge difference to the 15 areas that have been successfully in their bids, but there are many more areas that were unsuccessful, or did not even apply.

“In the past it has been far too easy to ignore or sideline issue like loneliness which are about preventing ill health in the long term. If those in charge of health and care budgets continue to take such a short-term approach, we may see services facing growing costs and unable to cope with the demand in the future.

The Campaign to End loneliness is calling for all Health and Wellbeing Boards to commit to addressing loneliness in their strategies. So far just over 50 per cent have done so, leaving just under half the areas in England appearing to have no plans to tackle loneliness among older people [3].

Ends

NOTES TO EDITORS

[1] The Big Lottery fund: http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/press-releases/england/080914_eng_ab_lottery-82m

[2] Holt-Lunstad, 2010

[3] Still ignoring the health risks, Campaign to End Loneliness, November 2013, <http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/plugins/download-monitor/download.php?id=174>
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