

**Embargoed until Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September at 00:01**

## **Campaign to End Loneliness launches in Wales**

- The Campaign to End Loneliness says that the stigma of loneliness is isolating thousands of older people in Wales as it launches its work in Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire
- 9 in 10 people in Pembrokeshire & Carmarthenshire believe loneliness in older age is now 'more likely than ever'
- Two-thirds of people in Pembrokeshire & Carmarthenshire have suffered with loneliness
- Nearly two-thirds (63.2%) of people from Pembrokeshire & Carmarthenshire say that admitting you are lonely is difficult
- Over 80% (80.6%) of over-65s in Pembrokeshire & Carmarthenshire say they would find it hard to admit to feeling lonely because they do not want to be a burden to others
- But 69% of people say they want to help address the loneliness crisis
- The Wellbeing of Wales report found that 17% of people in Wales are lonely
- Recent research from the London School of Economics also shows that it pays to tackle loneliness - every £1 invested in tackling loneliness can save £3 in health costs

**The Campaign to End Loneliness** has revealed that 9 in 10 people in Pembrokeshire & Carmarthenshire believe loneliness in older age is more likely than ever – with almost two-thirds saying that admitting to loneliness is difficult.

This research comes as the Campaign hosts an event to launch the first phase of its work to tackle loneliness in Pembrokeshire. The event is on Friday September 29<sup>th</sup> in Letterston Memorial Hall. The Carmarthenshire launch will take place on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October at Ffwrnes Theatre in Llanelli.

The Pembrokeshire launch is being held in partnership with Ageing Well in Wales (the Campaign's local partner) and Pembrokeshire County Council. The event will feature a series of talks on ageing, loneliness, resilience and technology, as well as workshops exploring the role of the Campaign to End Loneliness in Wales. The Campaign is supported with National Lottery funding from the Big Lottery Fund.

### **Claire O'Shea, Campaign Manager for the Campaign to End Loneliness, said:**

"We are thrilled to be launching the Campaign to End Loneliness in Wales. Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire are leading the way in tackling loneliness amongst older people – and we are delighted to be part of this.

"But, as our research shows, there is still much to do to end loneliness, thanks to the sheer scale of the problem. The health impacts of loneliness are devastating; it is as bad for you as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and worse for you than obesity. Most worrying, however, is the popular view in Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire that loneliness in older age is more likely than ever - that loneliness is inevitable. We're here to challenge that.

"We will be assessing loneliness in Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire, and working to find solutions with the local communities. We want to break down that stigma of loneliness – a stigma that means 80% of older people fear admitting to being lonely. And, with the majority of our communities wanting to address the loneliness epidemic, we know that we can do this. Together, we can end loneliness."

### **Sarah Rochira, Older People's Commissioner for Wales and Chair of Ageing Well in Wales, said:**

"Loneliness has a devastating impact upon older people's lives and tackling this modern epidemic must remain a key priority in Wales. It is therefore vital that good practice and initiatives like those being launched in Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire, which make a real difference to the lives of older people, become the standard across Wales so that people can easily access the help and support they may need."

**Cllr Simon Hancock, Older Persons' Champion for Pembrokeshire, said:**

“We have a vision of active and resourceful communities working together in Pembrokeshire to connect people, and we are very supportive of the many organisations here which are making a real difference - from community exercise classes to knitting groups, friendship circles, and more. We look forward to working with the Campaign to End Loneliness to develop new projects, and sharing the learning and evaluations across these programmes.”

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors**

- More than half (63%) of British adults have suffered with loneliness
- A quarter (24%) of those saying they have suffered with it for months or more
- A quarter of those aged 45+ believe that loneliness is an inevitable part of getting older.
- More than three-quarters (76%) of those aged 65+ say older people will not admit to feeling lonely because they do not want to burden others

**Based on a Censuswide survey of 2240 general consumers, including 504 65+ year olds, in August and September 2017**

**About the LSE Research**

The initial findings of [‘Making the economic case for investing in actions to prevent and/or tackle loneliness: a systematic review’](#) were published in September 2017. LSE searched a number of health and social science literature databases to identify studies that compare the costs of investing in an action to tackle / prevent loneliness with the costs that may be avoided as a result of intervention. **The review has demonstrated that it is clear that it pays to invest in loneliness interventions**

- The societal and health costs of loneliness (expenditure for visits to GP’s, A&E, prescriptions and other health-related costs) comes in at £6,000 per person over ten years
- Preliminary findings show that for every £1 invested you can expect a £3 return in health costs. If we spend £1 tackling the problem now, it will save us £3 in five years

**Loneliness: The Facts**

- There are 1.2 million chronically lonely older people in the UK (Age UK 2016, No-one should have no one)
- Half a million older people go at least five or six days a week without seeing or speaking to anyone at all (Age UK 2016, No-one should have no one)
- Over half (51%) of all people aged 75 and over live alone (Office for National Statistics 2010. *General Lifestyle Survey 2008*)
- Two fifths all older people (about 3.9 million) say the television is their main company (Age, U.K., 2014. Evidence Review: Loneliness in Later Life. *London: Age UK*)

**About the Campaign to End Loneliness**

The Campaign to End Loneliness believes that loneliness is everyone’s business. We believe that everyone in older age should have meaningful connections in their life. We work with thousands of organisations and people to tackle loneliness. We influence government policy and practice through our research and learning network, and campaign to ensure that loneliness is a public health priority at national and local levels. We believe that loneliness is not inevitable. Watch our film, [The Loneliness Project](#).

Using our recent grant from the Big Lottery Fund, we have begun work in four areas across the UK - Glasgow, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire, Cambridgeshire and Belfast - to support change already being delivered by our partners and others. In each area we hope to help catalyse ideas, share good practice and influence service providers, so loneliness is reduced for local older people.