

WOMEN'S INSTITUTE VOTES TO HELP BEAT LONELINESS

The Women's Institute has committed to taking local and national action to help tackle loneliness in the UK. Marcus Rand, Director of Development and Communications at the Campaign to End Loneliness, delivered a speech at the WI's Annual Conference this week, securing the support of WI members to act on loneliness.

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

"We are delighted that the WI has committed to helping us beat loneliness. It represents a step change for the issue, and for the progress we can make in tackling loneliness. Developing and maintaining meaningful connections with other humans is a basic need – and a basic right. Those connections could come from a meet-up in the community, a regular invitation to lunch, or a trip into town with other people. There is so much more we can all do to combat loneliness, and we look forward to working with the WI to do so. Loneliness is not inevitable – and the WI can play a huge part in helping us bring about the change we need."

Janice Langley, Chair of the National Federation of the Women's Institute, said:

"WI members have signalled their concern about the hidden loneliness epidemic that means almost one in five people in the UK report that they are always or often lonely. This campaign will see WI members working with other organisations to tackle loneliness in their own communities, and seeking to identify national solutions to this problem. The WI has been at the heart of communities throughout our 102 years, and the organisation remains a key place for women to come together to make friends, learn new skills and campaign on the issues that matter to them. WI members are engaged and active in their local communities, and this campaign will see them reaching out to their networks to tackle loneliness."

Read an excerpt of the speech on loneliness [here](#)

For media enquiries, please contact [the Campaign to End Loneliness press office](#).

NOTES TO EDITORS

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

Key loneliness facts:

- Over a [million people in the UK](#) feel chronically lonely, that is all or most of the time
- Loneliness and isolation in older age is a [serious public health issue](#) and increases the risk of conditions including dementia ([James et al, 2011](#)), high blood pressure ([Hawkley et al, 2010](#)) and depression ([Cacioppo et al, 2006](#)) ([Green et al, 1992](#)).
- Loneliness increases the demand on health services: academic research shows that those experiencing loneliness are [more likely](#) to use accident and emergency services ([Geller, Janson, McGovern and Valdini, 1999](#)), visit their GP ([Gerst-Emerson, Jayawardhana 2014](#)), and have higher use of medication ([Cohen, 2006](#))
- [76% GPs report](#) 1-5 patients a day come to their surgery because they are lonely