



LAUNCH OF THE FIRST FREE 24 HOUR HELPLINE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

THE SILVER LINE 0800 4 70 80 90

***“We will give you advice if you need it; we will give you friendship if you want it,
and we will protect you from abuse and neglect”***

The Silver Line Helpline is launching across the UK on MONDAY 25 NOVEMBER for every older person who needs information, friendship, advice and protection from abuse or neglect. It is the only free, confidential, 24 hour service for older people and as well as the helpline, trained volunteers will become Silver Line Friends providing regular friendship calls. Silver Line Scotland will be delivered by Age Scotland, answering calls from 8am - 8pm on weekdays, in partnership with The Silver Line.

To mark the launch, the results of a new survey will be released, exploring the extent of feelings of loneliness among older people and the most effective remedies.

According to the survey (of more than 1000 people over the age of 55 conducted by ComRes), “a chat on the phone” is perceived to be the best way to combat loneliness, with 9 out of 10 older people saying they would find it helpful (87%). And yet in the survey 1 in 4 older people say they never or seldom have a chat on the phone (25%).

Loneliness causes serious physical and mental damage. According to the Department of Health, loneliness has been estimated to be as dangerous as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, and twice as damaging as obesity.

The Silver Line survey reveals that 2.5 million older people (15% of the older population) often feel lonely. Given that there is a stigma attached to admitting loneliness, this figure may be the tip of the iceberg.

In 2012 The Campaign to End Loneliness estimated that more than a million people feel trapped in their homes. More than half the people over 75 live alone, and a fifth of them on a typical day do not spend any time with anyone else. About 5 million older people consider television their main form of company.

The Silver Line Helpline has been able to answer 7000 calls from older people during the pilot phase and it is clear that a phone call can be transformative. As one caller said "When I put the telephone down, I feel I belong to the human race". Another said, "It's so good to talk to someone who actually seems to be interested in what I think." A lady told us how alone she felt since her sister died, but now that she has The Silver Line to ring she feels less suicidal than she did; "you get so down you think why bother, but now I feel less shuffled under the carpet." A man said "It was the choice between ringing The Silver Line and jumping in the canal." Having tried suicide in the past, this time he rang the helpline. One lady in her eighties said she feels her "life is completely pointless" and she is "a waste of space."

Esther Rantzen, Chair and Founder of The Silver Line said, "It is tragic that older people are so undervalued and isolated that they believe life is not worth living and that they are no longer part of the human race. The new Silver Line with its free 24 hour number 0800 4 70 80 90 will be the single memorable number we hope all older people will turn to when they need information, friendship or protection. We will signpost them to the services in their community and by showing them we value them and care about them, we will restore their confidence and feelings of self-worth".

Silver Line's national launch has been made possible by a grant from the Big Lottery Fund of £5million over two years. **Peter Ainsworth, Chair, Big Lottery Fund** said "The loneliness and isolation of older people is one of the last big taboos – from individuals talking about how it affects them to society in general admitting that it is very common. ChildLine continues to transform the lives of so many children and has done so for the past 27 years. I believe that The Silver Line will make the same significant difference for today's older people and future generations by promoting dignity and helping to prevent the neglect of vulnerable older people."

Sophie Andrews, Chief Executive of the Silver Line said “We know how difficult it is for the older generation to admit their feelings of loneliness because they don’t want to become a burden. That is why we are offering information and advice, as well as friendship. We will not replicate the excellent services that are provided by organisations in the statutory and voluntary sectors, many of whom have supported and collaborated with us but we will be able to signpost our callers to them.

Our slogan is ‘No question is too big, no problem too small, no need to be alone’ and our simple phone number ‘oh eight hundred, for seventy, eighty, ninety’ is the only number they have to remember if they need help of any kind. “

The grant from the Big Lottery Fund will cover half the cost of running The Silver Line for two years. Founding partners of The Silver Line are Comic Relief, Swiss Re and BT who made the pilot phase of The Silver Line possible. BT is promoting the new phone number on a banner around the BT Tower to mark the launch of The Silver Line.

Care and Support Minister Norman Lamb said “We know how damaging loneliness can be on our mental and physical health, which is why we have supported the invaluable work of Silver Line from the beginning.

“In our busy lives we too easily forget the thousands of older people who often go for days without seeing or speaking to anyone, or rely on the television for company. This service will help provide people with the companionship and support they deserve in their older years.”

Esther Rantzen said “The Silver Line Helpline is free to callers and befrienders but the cost of telephone calls, of running the helpline 24/7, of volunteer recruitment and training will be met by the charity and will depend on the vision and generosity of supporters.

We hope the public will come to the aid of isolated and vulnerable older people who have contributed so much and now desperately need our help.”

- £5 will pay for a call with an older person who may not have spoken to another human being all week
- £50 will pay to recruit and train a volunteer to become a Silver Line Friend
- £100 will pay for one caller to be befriended for 3 months.

To watch The Silver Line launch film, click onto:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCcuVViM02M>

You can donate to The Silver Line

by phone, calling 020 7224 2747 during office hours or

by sending a cheque to “The Silver Line Helpline”, Minerva House, 42 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2RY.

Online donations can be made

via Just Giving Just Giving: www.justgiving.com/silverline

via BT My Donate: www.mydonate.bt.com/charities/thesilverlinehelpline

Or text Silver10 to 70500 to give £10. If you’d rather give a different amount text Silver followed by the amount you want to give in whole pounds and without a £ sign, so £2 is Silver2

Branches of Barclays Bank will accept donations over the counter

sort code 20-71-82: account 00974692

And anyone interested in becoming a Silver Line Friend or volunteer fundraiser can find details on our website www.thesilverline.org.uk

or email [**volunteering@thesilverline.org.uk**](mailto:volunteering@thesilverline.org.uk)

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Notes to Editors

- The Big Lottery Fund, the largest distributor of National Lottery good cause funding, is responsible for giving out 40% of the money raised for good causes by the National Lottery.
- The Fund is committed to bringing real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need and has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK. Since its inception in 2004 BIG has awarded close to £6bn.
- The Fund was formally established by Parliament on 1 December 2006.
- Since the National Lottery began in 1994, 28p from every pound spent by the public has gone to good causes. As a result, over £30 billion has now been raised and more than 400,000 grants awarded across arts, sport, heritage, charities, health, education and the environment.

Survey methodology note: ComRes interviewed 1,126 GB adults aged 55 and over by telephone between 11th and 27th October 2013. Data were weighted to be representative of all GB adults aged 55+ by age, gender and region.

ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Full data tables can be found at www.comres.co.uk.