



The Silver Line Helpline, Minerva House, 42 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2RY

The Silver Line Helpline marks Older People's Day (Wednesday 1st October) by appealing for 1000 volunteers

The Silver Line Helpline, launched across the UK last November, has already taken more than 230,000 calls from older people seeking information, friendship, advice and protection from abuse or neglect.

More than one thousand older people receive weekly friendship calls from specially trained volunteers known as Silver Line Friends but there is a long waiting list and a further one thousand lonely and isolated older people are waiting to be matched to a volunteer. So to mark Older People's Day, The Silver Line is calling on would-be volunteers to contact volunteering@thesilverline.org.uk

Here is how one volunteer Silver Line Friend, Colin, describes what is involved:

"It was with some trepidation that on a Sunday evening in early July I entered the Silver Line website, pressed on Contacts and then on Call. Through the magic of technology, which I have to admit, I do not understand, I was immediately talking to my first Silver Line friend.

It went better than I had anticipated. We quickly found common interests – Indian cooking and then some military history. What a combination! 30 minutes passed very quickly!

An hour later and with greater confidence I called my second friend and discovered a wonderful lady who was in the Land Army during the Second World War. She could write a book about her experiences which included – forging her father's signature on the application form (yes, really) and then running away from home in the middle of the night to join up in Wales. That call lasted 40 minutes.

Since then every Sunday evening has been very special, and only last Sunday both my friends said how much they enjoyed our newly formed relationship. That really makes the whole thing very worthwhile and it is a privilege for me to have such interesting people to talk to."

Esther Rantzen CBE Founder and President of The Silver Line says: "The truth about older people is that many of them have led long and fascinating lives but often feel that nobody is interested in their experiences. So they are reluctant to talk about it and more than half of callers to The Silver Line callers tell us they have no one to speak to *at all* apart from The Silver Line. Becoming a Silver Line Friend is an immensely rewarding and enjoyable thing to do, and our volunteers tell us they get as much out of the conversations as the older people they chat to".



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Sophie Andrews, Chief Executive of The Silver Line says: “ The training involves a half day workshop and is open to everyone. We have just matched a 97 year old volunteer to a 90 year old caller but we welcome volunteers of all ages from 18 upwards, and all backgrounds. We are particularly looking for volunteers in the London area who would be prepared to commit to an hour a week to transform the lives of a lonely or isolated older person”

The Campaign to End Loneliness estimated that more than a million people feel trapped in their homes. There are nearly 15 million people over the age of 60 in the UK. More than half the people over 75 live alone, and on a typical day 1 in 5 of them do not spend any time with anyone else. About 5 million older people consider television their main form of company.

Please contact Sarah Caplin details below for further information.

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