

**A message from Sophie Andrews,
Chief Executive, The Silver Line**

Sophie being interviewed for our new film "What Silver Line Means To Me" produced for us pro bono by Studio Lambert. It will be available on our website soon.

As we look forward to our first *Silver Week* in June, it's a good moment to reflect on how far we have come in 18 months since we launched The Silver Line. And as I chatted to the film crew for our new film I can honestly say that Silver Line means a lot more to me than a fascinating job and a great team of people around me who care about our loneliest and most vulnerable older people.

It is that, of course, but in our short existence Silver Line has become a uniquely simple and important way of reaching the oldest members of our society who feel that no one cares whether they live or die.

They may be on their own at home or caring for a partner with dementia, or they may live in a care home or sheltered accommodation. They may have a loving family and friends, or they may be without either. Yet what all callers have in common is the painful experience that several days can go by without having a real conversation or a friendly chat with another human being.

They may not have friends or family to laugh and cry with whenever they need to - but they do have us. And we will never be unavailable for them or too busy or closed. Many older people tell us they feel estranged and abandoned by our society which prizes youth above age, and new trends above old wisdom. And many feel cut off from a world that focuses more and more on digital communications.

Our callers often tell us how much they love receiving letters and cards and phone calls but all too often their busy families want to email or text them rather than visit and chat.

We have now received more than 425,000 calls in our helpline bases near Blackpool and Edinburgh. Some older people call us regularly, several times a day or a week, but 75% of callers are new to the helpline. We have recruited and trained more than 1600 volunteer Silver Line Friends and have matched 1200 older people to their own Silver Line volunteer for a regular, weekly friendship call. Now we are urgently matching newly-trained volunteers with callers on our waiting list for a Silver Line Friend, and we explain how this process happens later in this newsletter.

Most of our callers rarely complain about their social isolation. One caller explained, "We were the stiff upper lip generation, living through the war and making do. We feel lucky to be alive and we certainly aren't about to complain about being lonely. It's too shameful to admit to that".

But of course that's not right.

Loneliness is agony and we need to protect our oldest members of society from feeling abandoned and too ashamed to admit it. The Silver Line is a brilliant and effective way of doing that – and it still amazes me that until November 2013, there was no free and confidential, 24 hour helpline which was available to support and protect our most vulnerable oldest citizens. Now many other helplines have a recorded message suggesting that callers can ring The Silver Line when they are closed.

We have proved what a vital lifeline we are and our greatest challenge is to ensure we are available for every older person who needs us now and in the future.

Thank you to all our supporters who are helping us raise funds to ensure our sustainability, to all our volunteers who make regular friendship calls to older people and share our belief that a simple connection with another human being can be life-changing. But above all, thank you to our callers for placing your trust in us, and telling us about your lives – and how we are making a difference.

Precision Creative and the SilverMarque

We would like to express our huge thanks to Precision Creative and Media run by Scott Ford who designed Silver Line's leaflets and flyers at no cost to the charity and helped us to get them printed at very preferential rates.



Scott Ford, Precision Creative and Media

Scott and his company Precision also organise SilverMarque - a networking event for companies selling products or services to older people, to share best practice in marketing and customer service, and to make sure that all members treat their customers fairly.

Some companies involved in SilverMarque (many of which are household names like Stannah and Damart) have supported The Silver Line too. And we are particularly grateful for Scott's introduction to IDS UK which is the reason our leaflet and posters are in a GPs surgery near you.



IDS UK specialises in distributing and displaying information leaflets and posters to 5000 of the largest surgeries across the UK, to an audience of more than 31 million registered patients. We have been working closely with Edward Pickering, MD of IDS UK who helped update a version of our leaflet specifically for GP surgeries, with a new cover featuring Silver Line callers Zillah and Bob.



Edward Pickering told Silver Line News, "The largest group and most frequent visitors to GP surgeries are older people. The over 60s can expect to visit their GP surgery 7 times a year and spend at least 20 minutes in the waiting room. Our national leaflet and poster services can be found in nearly 5000 waiting rooms where 7.2 million NHS registered patients over the age of 60 are registered. It is a perfect environment to reach out to lonely and vulnerable older people, their relatives, friends and carers and significantly raise awareness on The Silver Line.



Edward Pickering, Managing Director of IDS UK

"Loneliness is a terrible burden for many people effecting their quality of life. I feel very privileged to be able to support The Silver Line with a 12 month national leaflet awareness campaign in our GP surgery network that started in February of this year. This campaign will be further enhanced with surgery poster campaign starting this May."

SILVER WEEK, 31 May - 6 June 2015

There's a new week on The Silver Line calendar, "Silver Week". We're asking as many people as possible, across the UK, to join together to raise awareness and funds for us. It doesn't matter whether you have only 10 minutes to spare, there's something that everyone can do to take part, and small or large, every activity will be hugely important.

Why?

As we look forward to summer activities, for many older people nothing changes; they remain lonely and vulnerable. The Silver Line can help to change that.

We are less than 18 months old and yet in that short time The Silver Line Helpline has already received more than 425,000 calls from older people across the UK. We need to make sure that we continue to be here for every older person who calls us, now and in the future, so please help if you can.

How to get involved

Only 10 minutes available?

It takes seconds to share our Facebook and Twitter posts with your networks, and every time you do, someone new could hear about The Silver Line. It's a small thing, but could make a huge difference. So please help us to grow our social media reach.

We currently have 3750 people following us on Twitter, we would love to reach 10,000 by the end of Silver Week. So please get sharing and start the ripple of support.



www.facebook.com/thesilverlineuk



[@thesilverlineuk](https://twitter.com/thesilverlineuk)

Communications at work

Does your workplace have a newsletter or intranet site? Could you ask the person who manages it whether The Silver Line can be featured during Silver Week or even at another time? If any help is needed with information or editorial, we will be happy to provide it. Email Hannah Rogers on: hannah.rogers@thesilverline.org.uk

All the companies and organisations who get involved will be featured on our **Silver Week Partners' page** on our website.

To make a donation, please phone 020 7224 2020, or go online www.thesilverline.org.uk/donate 3

Do you live near a Waitrose?

There are 322 branches of Waitrose across the UK, so you may have one close by. Every month through the Community Matters in-store green token scheme, Waitrose customers are invited to vote for one of three charities to receive a share of £3000. Charities are suggested through the completion of a very simple nomination card – which takes a few minutes to fill out. You don't need to be a regular customer to nominate a charity but you do need to complete a card at the Customer Services desk. They are usually near the entrance, and by nominating The Silver Line, you can make a real difference.

Calling all Sainsbury's shoppers

Sainsbury's new 'Everyday Shopping Card' allows you to donate 4% of your weekly shopping total to The Silver Line, every time you visit! This is a fantastic way to support us without it costing you a penny.

www.thesilverline.org.uk/donate/donation-sainsburys-every-time-shop/

Carry on shopping

Shop at your regular online stores, at exactly the same prices (including all special offers), but do it via [Top Cashback](#), [Give as You Live](#), [Easy Fundraising.co.uk](#) or buy [Flowers by Post](#) or [magazines](#) and choose The Silver Line as your charity nomination. We then receive a donation on your purchases. It won't cost you a penny more - and you will be helping to support a lonely older person.

Spring clean

Silver Week gives you the perfect excuse to have that cupboard, loft or garage clear-out that you have been promising for ages. If you list the items on [Ebay](#) and choose The Silver Line as your charity to benefit, we will receive a donation from your sales.

It's not all about marathon running!

That's not to say we wouldn't welcome you running one for The Silver Line, but fundraising can be easy, quick and fun. We hope that you will use Silver Week to do something with your family, friends or work colleagues. You might like to get involved with one of our new Silver Week initiatives or even create your own. Of course if you do want to do a sporting challenge, we have plenty available (see bucket list).

Loose change

Annoying for many people, loose change certainly isn't a problem for us. We can send you one of our new cardboard collection boxes so you have somewhere useful to put your coins in. Email chris.massarella@thesilverline.org.uk and we will send you one. Help us to alleviate loneliness. The change really is in your pocket.



Silver Lines of coins

Fun for the kids, but 'big kids' can enjoy this too. Create your own 'Silver Line' made of coins by placing them side-by-side along a piece of string, in any shape you like. Just 1 metre (or 3 feet) of 50ps or £1 coins can pay for at least 6 lonely older people to call the Helpline. This is ideal as a quick and easy activity for your workplace. But if you have children of primary school age, perhaps you could suggest this to their head or class teacher. Fun, educational and very worthwhile.



Silver Snacks

Cake sales never go out of fashion but are often not always the best idea for anyone trying to diet. Silver Snacks can be a lighter alternative! Popcorn is a great option and it's very quick to make. Download our new Silver Snack Pack complete with ideas for popcorn flavourings, serving cones, and other great snack alternatives. Why not hold a Silver Snack sale at work, at home with friends, at your book club, or any other gathering.

Silver 60

Donate your lunch hour to The Silver Line to raise money. A 60-minute cake sale with friends or holding a Silver Snacks sale at work is a quick and easy way to help The Silver Line. You'll be amazed how quickly the money will add up and also how popular it will be. You might want to do more than one Silver 60!

Silver Screenings

The *silver screen* has changed considerably since the name was coined for the cinema in the 1920s. We are suggesting a stay-at-home film experience... Why not hold a "Silver Screening" movie night for The Silver Line? Set a date, pick a movie and then get together with your family, grandparents and friends. A novel twist might be to choose a silver anniversary classic film (from 25 years ago) – *Green Card*, *Pretty Woman*, *Ghost*, *Edwards Scissor Hands*, *Total Recall* – the list of popular classics is endless. Make some Silver Snacks to eat while watching, and enjoy the night. Collect a donation from everyone who attends, perhaps even the equivalent of what you might have spent at the cinema, and everyone has a great time whilst helping The Silver Line!

Silver Sweepstakes

Who doesn't like to win the prize pot in a sweepstake? *Guess2Give* is an easy way to set one up online with a donation to the Silver Line and a prize pot to win too! You can set up a sweepstake for anything you like for your fundraising, from major sporting events - you might like have to have one for the FA Cup Final around the time of the first goal – or around your own event. For example, if you are taking part in a run, why not invite people to guess your finish time with the prize pot going to whoever picks the closest? It's a great way to get people involved in fundraising and simple to set up.

www.thesilverline.org.uk/guess2give

The bucket list

If you would like to take part in a bigger sporting challenge – running, cycling, walking, trekking, skydiving or to join one of our teams with a place in RideLondon, The Royal Parks Half Marathon we would love to have you on board. From beginners to experts we can find the right [challenge](#) for you and your family and friends.

Tell us what you are going to do for Silver Week

We would love to hear about what you do for Silver Week, and to tell others about what you are up to, hopefully encouraging them to join in.

Seventeen of our supporters are really getting involved and will be tandem skydiving to kick off the week on 31 May! "Something amazing for me, and for a great cause too. 'Everyone wins' as one of the team puts it".

What will you do?

We have lots of materials to help – posters to advertise your event, collection boxes, balloons; the only limit to involvement is your imagination. Email: chris.massarella@thesilverline.org.uk or call 020 7224 2020. And don't forget to shout about it on your social media sites.



How we spend each pound



Of every £1 donated, we spend 90p directly on lonely and isolated older people. 9p goes to helping us raise the next pound and 1p on governance and other admin costs.

Wear one of our new T-shirts

Help us to get people talking about The Silver Line by ordering one of our new T-shirts. Available for a donation of £5 plus p&p, this is a great way to support our work.



Just £5 will help us to answer a call at The Silver Line Helpline from a lonely or vulnerable older person who may not have spoken to another person all week. If you would like to make a donation please:

Phone: 020 7224 2020

Go online: www.thesilverline.org.uk/donate

Send a cheque payable to: "The Silver Line",
To: The Silver Line, 42 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2RY.

Thank you.

Leaving a gift to The Silver Line

"I really can't tell you the difference that the kind people who talk to me every day at The Silver Line have made. For the first time in years, I know that there someone to talk to just a minute away. I want other people to have The Silver Line when I'm long gone, so I am leaving a little something to them in my Will. I hope others will be able to call like I do."



Making a Will is something most of us rarely discuss. It can be daunting and easy to put off but it's actually quite straightforward. Leaving a gift in a Will to The Silver Line is an invaluable way to support our work, and could quite literally transform the life of an older person both now and in future years.

Legacy gifts, of any size, are so important to The Silver Line. They allow us to plan for the future secure in the knowledge that there will be funds coming to us in the years ahead.

As we celebrate our very first Silver Week, we would like to ask you to consider the possibility of leaving a legacy gift to The Silver Line. Your family and friends will of course be your first priority but after you have provided for them, we would be extremely grateful if, having seen the huge difference that the charity is already making to the lives of so many older people, you might help to ensure the longevity of The Silver Line.

We are extremely grateful to have just received our first legacy gift from a lady who called The Silver Line, regularly. Remembering us will make others less lonely.

If you would like to discuss legacies further in confidence or would like us to send you details on how to leave a gift in your will, please email nina.gopal@thesilverline.org.uk or call her on 020 3793 9180.

Tribute Funds

Losing a loved one is never easy. We hope that the new Silver Line Tribute Funds will offer a lasting way to celebrate the memory of someone special whilst at the same time supporting the work of The Silver Line.

Tribute Funds provide a place online for memories, photographs, donations and even music which can be easily shared with family and friends for years to come. Special anniversaries, birthdays and celebrations can also be marked with the lighting of candles.

Setting up a Silver Line Tribute Fund is easy and can be done at any time. You might like to start one as a central place to collect funeral donations. The Funds can also be used to continue raising money in the memory of the Tribute Fund holder for as long as you would like.

Silver Line Tribute Funds will launch on 31 May, 2015 at the start of Silver Week.

If you would like any further information please visit: www.thesilverline.org.uk/tributefunds or call Chris on 020 3793 9182.



The Perfect Match

Every few weeks Silver Line callers are asked to let us know how their friendship calls are going – and we are delighted to find that many of them tell us *“it’s a perfect match”*.

With more than 1200 older people receiving regular weekly friendship calls, it seems a good moment to reveal the process of matching callers and volunteer Silver Line Friends.

It’s a bit of a science and a bit of an art – but to get it right we also need an element of luck, as Liam who actually does the job says:

“The first thing to establish is which day of the week (or weekend) and roughly what time of day the older person would like to speak to his or her new friend – and then to work out which volunteers will be available then. This can involve quite a few phone calls to the older person – and a few calls or emails to the volunteer because, of course, people change their minds about calling say every Sunday afternoon or Friday evening, and realize that forming a Silver Line Friendship is a serious commitment”.

He makes it sound simple but in fact we have to create and maintain a secure data system with all the up-to-date information about availability of callers and volunteers which Liam and the matching team can then work from. The most perfect match on paper will not work if the caller wants a particular day/time, and the volunteer is not available

Although it is not always important for friends to have similar interests, a sense of humour and an interest in the other person’s likes, can make for a potentially good match.

After an initial chat on the telephone to our volunteering team, volunteers attend an hour and a half training via phone. We used to have face-to-face training but conference call training makes sense because friendships will be over the phone, and it’s more efficient and cost-effective.

We draw up “pen pictures” of callers and volunteers, and the matching team then sets to work to find a match which they believe will make both parties happy. It’s vital that the “matched pair” will enjoy

their conversations, but how does Liam know that they will get on? *“We don’t – we get a feeling when we chat to callers about their personality and if they would like to chat to someone bubbly and outgoing, or more introspective and a good listener. Then we go through a list of trained volunteers who are not yet matched, to make the best pairing”*.

“There is no point matching a caller who only wants to chat about pigeon fancying with a Silver Line Friend who doesn’t think they could ever be interested but many callers find they can enthuse their new friends with their hobbies and interests. So one volunteer who has never been able to do cryptic crosswords is now being taught how to – slowly!”

It sounds simple, but in fact we have to create and maintain a secure system with all the up-to-date information about availability of callers and volunteers which Liam and the matching team work from. The most perfect match on paper will not work if the caller and volunteer have different availability.

Wilma, who is one of our first Silver Line Friends and began volunteering when we were still in our pilot phase, now talks to four callers every Tuesday evening. She calls it her “Friends’ Night”.

“I can’t imagine them not being in my life. It’s just like having a good friend. When they say to me, ‘I really look forward to your call’, it is so humbling. But I really look forward to talking to them, too. I’ve been talking to John for a while now. He used to do a lot of dancing, ballroom dancing, with his wife. But he stopped when she passed away. I go to line dancing classes so we had a lot in common. Not only has he started dancing again but he has now re-opened his class on a Sunday.”

The effect on callers of having their own dedicated Silver Line Friend has been transformational for many older people - and we will tell you some of their stories in the next newsletter - but here is a flavour of the feedback we have received;

“It should be called The Silver Lifeline. It’s lovely. I so look forward to her call. I love talking to people”.

“I look forward to the call. We talk about home life and one thing and another. Anyone like me should ring the Silver Line.”

**A message from Our President and Founder,
Dame Esther Rantzen DBE**

Ellen, a widow in her eighties, wrote to tell me about her family; her husband and son had died, she has a devoted daughter who visits her twice a week *"But because I have health problems I can go three days without seeing or speaking to anyone. I'm an optimist by nature, and sometimes I have to be, when I spend another pointless day, feeling that I am a waste of space."*

Why should a clever active woman like Ellen, on whom her family relied, now consider herself a waste of space? That's what loneliness does. It attacks confidence, self-esteem, physical and mental health suffer, and yet it can be so easily cured. All it takes is company. And it doesn't have to be face to face. The Silver Line Helpline (0800 4 70 80 90) has now answered more than 425,000 phone calls from older people. *"When I get off the phone"* said John aged 80, who regularly speaks to The Silver Line, *"I feel like I belong to the human race."* Surely as an older person he should feel valued, important, a resource our country all too often ignores.

Our Silver Line team feel it is a privilege to speak to our callers, the helpline is free, confidential and open 24/7. We receive around 1,000 calls a day. When you walk into our helpline office you hear the sound of laughter. There is no "call-handling time", we love the conversations, the memories we share.

For the majority of our callers have nobody to talk to at all, apart from us. I spoke to Bill on Christmas Day. He told me *"This is the first Christmas Day for years when I have spoken to anyone. It can be a week I go without talking to anyone. It can be several weeks that I go without having a proper conversation."*

Margaret wrote to tell me how much difference The Silver Line *"this superb service"* has made to her life. She cares for her husband, *"it's a quiet house"*. She rings the helpline when she needs to, she also has a volunteer Silver Line Friend who calls her each week, and she has recently joined a Silver Circle, one of our new conference calls. *"How fascinating,"* she says *"to listen and discuss so many topics. We oldies do still have lots to offer...yet at this stage in life it can be lonely. At times we seem to be regarded as second rate, a bit of a nuisance, yet we have all the experience of life, been useful and busy...indeed I do hate to be patronized."* Who doesn't?

So what have we learned over the past 18 months? Firstly, how profound the need is, and how crucial important it is to break through the prison of silence that loneliness creates.

Secondly, how proud the older generation are, and how determined *"not to become burden,"* as our callers tell us.

And thirdly, how difficult it is to fund raise for a charity for older people. When we launched ChildLine in 1986 the public responded with wonderful generosity. Children pull on the heartstrings. Sadly, The Silver Line has not created the same response, yet. Except of course from our callers. Vera, who rang us on Christmas morning to thank us for being there, wrote to me and said: *"My life has transformed so much for the better. I enclose a small donation. I've had more than my money's worth."* With a lifetime of service behind her, Vera is typical of the uncomplaining, proud older people who call The Silver Line.

Solitary confinement is usually the punishment for a serious crime. But we have learned from The Silver Line that far too often it is the punishment for people like John, Bill, Ellen and Vera, and the thousands of people who call our helpline, whose only crime is to have grown old.

If you would like to contribute an article or feature to the next newsletter, contact:

sarah.caplin@thesilverline.org.uk.