



- *Esther Rantzen President and Founder of The Silver Line is created Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire in New Year's Honours*
- *More than 2000 older people in contact with The Silver Line over Christmas*
- *1800 calls received at the helpline over Christmas and Boxing Day 2014, almost double the number received last year*
- *250 more older people received an extra call on Christmas Day from Silver Line volunteers because otherwise they would have spoken to no one else*

Esther Rantzen is created a Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire in the New Year's Honours List. She receives this honour in recognition of her inspirational work at ChildLine and The Silver Line, both national charities she founded and supports.

Dame Esther said "I am thrilled that this honour recognises the contribution made by ChildLine and The Silver Line in transforming lives, and I am delighted that the talented teams at both charities have also been recognised for their inspirational work and devotion to the most vulnerable children and older people in our society. I feel completely committed to the work of both charities and it is a wonderful honour to receive in my 75th year. My greatest wish is that Desmond could be here to share this news - he would have been so excited."

Sophie Andrews, Chief Executive of The Silver Line said "There are not many people who have established one national charity in their lifetime and continued to support and lead it for almost 30 years but our President, Dame Esther Rantzen, has inspired and founded two. At The Silver Line we are so proud of all she has achieved and we are delighted that she has been awarded this much-deserved honour. It recognises her tireless work on behalf of the most vulnerable youngest and oldest citizens of our country who have no one else to protect and help them."

Professor Patrick Geoghegan OBE, Chairman of The Silver Line said "It is perfect timing for Esther to receive this honour as The Silver Line which is her inspiration is now a thriving national charity, helping the most lonely and isolated older people in this country. We could not be more proud of our President, Dame Esther Rantzen, and her achievements."

More than 300,000 calls have been answered by The Silver Line at the helpline bases in Preston and Edinburgh since its national launch in November 2013 following a Big Lottery Fund grant.

On Christmas and Boxing Day 2014 The Silver Line on 0800 4 70 80 90 took almost 1800 calls and a further 250 people received a special "Happy Christmas Day Call" which they had requested in the run up to Christmas. Members of The Silver Line team comprising paid staff and volunteers, including the Trustees, each called several older people for a chat over the holidays.

Dame Esther said “when I spoke to Brian on Christmas Day he told me ‘This is the first time I’ve had anyone to talk to on Christmas Day for years...it is quite normal for me to go for a week without speaking to anyone; a few weeks without having a proper conversation. I don’t like being out of touch with the world but I think I am.”

Another Silver Line caller, Dorothy, told her Silver Line Friend on Christmas Day “ I think The Silver Line should be renamed The Silver LIFE Line – it has made such a difference to the way I feel”.

Vera aged 78 wrote to Esther Rantzen after last Xmas. “This has been my third Christmas ‘Home Alone’ but this time it was different because of you. I’ve found myself thinking ‘Thank God for Esther Rantzen’s Silver Line’. It’s a wonderful idea and I’m sure it’s helped thousands of people as well as me. I’m a 78 year widow – alone since October 2006 when my husband died. Sometimes I just feel like having a chat and there’s no one at that time I can phone. Now I’ve got Silver Line and I feel I’ve got a whole lot of new friends and have had some lovely conversations. Where did you find such lovely people? I’m enclosing a donation to help you. I feel as though I’ve had more than my money’s worth”. Vera phoned the Helpline at 8 am this Christmas morning, as soon as she got up, to thank them for being there.

Another caller, Annie, got in touch to tell The Silver Line, “It is always harder to be alone in the morning, with no-one to discuss the day's activities. I was so pleased to see a neighbour unlatch my gate, with a Christmas card to post in the letterbox. I leapt up to open the door, just to exchange a few words with a fellow human - what a difference that can make. Only a word or two. The neighbour shouted anxiously as I rummaged for the key - "I'm in a frantic rush", and she shot away up the path. My heart dropped into my slippers. I looked at the card, and I wondered what the card meant, when she could not spare one minute of human contact. Now you are talking about emotional loneliness. That's exactly it. “

A few facts about The Silver Line, loneliness and older people in the UK

67% of older people say *loneliness and isolation* is their principal reason for calling the helpline but the stigma of loneliness means that they are often reluctant to ask for help. 88% of callers to The Silver Line live on their own. 7 out of every 10 calls (68%) are made in the evenings and at weekends. These are the loneliest times for older people which is why it is important that The Silver Line is available when other services are not, including Christmas and New Year’s Day. 5% (500,000) people aged 65+ in the UK say they spent Christmas Day alone*. There are more than half a million people over the age of 90 in the UK and more than three million people in the UK aged 80+.**

You can donate to The Silver Line

- **by phone, calling 020 7224 2747 during office hours or**
- **by sending a cheque payable to “The Silver Line Helpline”, Minerva House, 42 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2RY.**

Online donations can be made at

- **www.thesilverline.org.uk/donate**
- **Or text LONE14£5 to 70070 to give £5. If you’d rather give a different amount text LONE14£ followed by the amount you want to give in whole pounds so £2 is LONE14£2**

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

For interviews and case studies contact:

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***Note for Editors: The Silver Line, December 2014**

- 300,000 calls received at the Helpline by December 2014
- 850 volunteer "Silver Line Friends" matched to 1200 older people plus 1100 keeping in touch calls taking place every week
- 68% of calls are after 6pm or at weekends
- 40% callers male / 60% female
- 34% callers aged between 60-69, 23% between 70-79, 18% between 80-89, 5% are over 90 but this age group are twice as likely to call than any other group as a % of the 90+ UK population
- 67% of callers contact the helpline because they are lonely or isolated, 88% live alone and 54% say they have no one else at all to speak to
- There are 160 staff at the helpline working on a 24/7 rota
- The Silver Line works in partnership with Age Scotland to deliver the service in Scotland between 8am-8pm Mon-Fri
- 5% (500,000) people aged 65+ in the UK say they spent Christmas Day alone from an unpublished Christmas and Laughter Survey quoted by Age UK
- There are more than half a million (527,239 ONS) people over the age of 90 in the UK and more than 3,000,000 people in the UK aged 80+ (3,009 078 ONS).