

# NEWS



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## **OBE in New Year's Honours List 2018 for The Silver Line's Chief Executive Sophie Andrews**

The Silver Line is pleased to announce that Chief Executive Sophie Andrews has been awarded an OBE in recognition of her contribution to services for older people in the New Year's Honours List 2018.

Sophie Andrews was approached to set up The Silver Line by ChildLine founder Dame Esther Rantzen and was appointed as Chief Executive of The Silver Line in September 2012. She joined after having held the role of Head of Volunteering for the NSPCC, and has previous experience of working in senior management within call centres and elderly care and across the private, public and voluntary sectors for over 25 years.

She has overseen the charity's development from a pilot project into a national institution in just five years. Within two months of taking up her role Sophie successfully launched a pilot scheme across the North West of England, subsequently securing the funding to launch The Silver Line helpline - the only free, national, confidential 24/7 helpline offering information, friendship and advice to older people - nationally in November 2013.

In just over four years since the national launch, and some 1.7 million calls later, The Silver Line is known to millions of older people and is firmly established as part of the support network for some of the most vulnerable members of our society. And the charity continues to witness extraordinary – and rising – demand for its services: December 2017 was its busiest month ever, with over 47,000 calls to the helpline.

Commenting on Sophie's OBE, Dame Esther Rantzen, Founder and President of The Silver Line said:

*"We are absolutely thrilled that Sophie's achievement as the founding chief executive of The Silver Line has been recognised. She has created a fantastic team and a service which is already transforming lives.*

*"Over Christmas, The Silver Line was very often the only contact isolated and vulnerable older people had to prove that they are valued and remembered. I personally spoke to a number of our callers, and they were unanimous that whatever else is absent from their lives, The Silver Line is consistently supportive, and there for them around the clock – and makes them feel they are no longer alone.*

*"Sophie has dedicated herself to the welfare of older people who are all too often forgotten, and this honour is an acknowledgement of her unique passion and commitment."*

Patrick Geoghegan, The Silver Line's Chair of Trustees added:

*"I am absolutely delighted that Sophie Andrews has been recognised in the New Year's Honours List and awarded an OBE. As Chair of The Silver Line I have worked with Sophie since her appointment as Chief Executive and have been amazed at how much our relatively young charity has achieved under her leadership.*

*“Sophie has done so much in promoting awareness of loneliness among many older people living in the UK. I call this the hidden epidemic facing our country and which I believe will have a major impact on our society if not addressed. She is also recognised by our staff and volunteers as a compassionate and caring leader who is always there to advise and support.*

*“Sophie recently said: “It’s hard to imagine a time when The Silver Line didn’t exist.” It’s hard to imagine how it would exist without Sophie.”*

-ENDS-

*Spokesperson interviews, case studies and images available on request.*

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### **Note to Editors**

#### **About The Silver Line**

- The Silver Line Helpline (0800 4 70 80 90) is the only free, national, confidential helpline open every day and night, offering information, friendship and advice to older people over the age of 55
- Launched in November 2013, the Helpline has received more than 1.5 million calls to date – currently averaging 10,000 per week, of which 80% are phoning for the first time
- The UK’s top 3 ‘loneliest places’ for older people based on call volumes to the Helpline from across 45 regions are: Lancashire, Essex and West Midlands (further information re full ‘rankings’ available on request)
- Two thirds of calls are received overnight and on the weekend, when other services are shut (and which often refer their callers to The Silver Line on their afterhours answerphone message)
- The Silver Line also offers personalised, one-to-one friendship services, delivered by an army of around 3000 volunteer Silver Line Friends. These include Silver Line Telephone Friends, Silver Letters and Silver Circles
- The cost of calls to the Helpline, and The Silver Line’s other friendship services, are paid for by the donations it receives; the charity relies entirely on voluntary income
- 68% of callers contact the helpline because they are lonely or isolated, 90% live alone, and 54% say they have no one else to speak to
- Around five per cent of older people calling the helpline report present or historic abuse
- HRH The Duchess of Cornwall became the charity’s first Royal Patron in July 2017
- More details on The Silver Line website: [www.thesilverline.org.uk](http://www.thesilverline.org.uk)

### **Background Information on Loneliness**

#### **Current research and statistics on loneliness**

- Research over decades has found a fairly constant proportion (10-13%) of older people feeling lonely often or always – that’s over 1 million older people currently (*TNS survey for Age UK Apr 2014*)
- 12 % of older people feel trapped in their own home (*TNS survey for Age UK Apr 2014*)
- 6 per cent of older people leave their house once a week or less (*Age UK Loneliness Evidence Review, Jul 2014*)
- 17% of older people are in contact with family, friends and neighbours less than once a week, and 11% are in contact less than once a month (*Campaign To End Loneliness Evidence Research 2003*)
- A Campaign To End Loneliness survey found 84% of elderly people say they felt lonely some times while 13% feel lonely all the time (*June 2016*)
- In 2016, 7.66 million people lived alone in the UK. 3.64 million (48%) were people aged 65 and over (*ONS 2016*)
- *Age UK: Loneliness: in figures*
  - 200,000 older people have not had a conversation with friends or family for a month. - 3.9 million older people agree the television is their main form of company.

**Implications** • Being lonely has a significant effect on individuals' health: a recent systematic review of research found that loneliness can increase the risk of premature death by 30%. It is associated with higher blood pressure and depression, and leads to higher rates of mortality-comparable to those associated with smoking and alcohol consumption. It is also linked to higher incidence of dementia, with one study reporting a doubled risk of Alzheimer's disease in lonely people compared with those who were not lonely. See also recent research by Brigham Young University <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2017/08/lonely-die.aspx>

- According to a paper by *Social Finance (Jul 2015)* which reviewed existing evidence on the impacts of loneliness:

When compared to a population of older people who are never lonely, older people who are always or often lonely can be:

- 3.4 times more likely to suffer depression;
  - 1.9 times more likely to develop dementia in the following 15 years; and
  - Two thirds more likely to be physically inactive, which may lead to a 7% increased likelihood of diabetes, 8% increased likelihood of stroke and 14% increased likelihood of coronary heart disease
- Drawing on specific studies, some from the UK and others from overseas, when compared to people who are never lonely, older people who are lonely are on average:
    - 1.8 times more likely to visit their GP\*;
    - 1.6 times more likely to visit A&E;
    - 1.3 times more likely to have emergency admissions; and
    - 3.5 times more likely to enter local authority-funded residential care
  - Other outcomes include:
    - The increased likelihood of requiring domiciliary care;
    - The increased likelihood of anxiety\*\*;
    - The increased likelihood of developing chronic lung disease;
    - The increased likelihood of developing arthritis and mobility impairment; and
    - A direct increase in claiming benefits including Attendance Allowance for mobility-related assistance.

### **Mental Health**

- Research from the Royal College of Psychiatrists estimates that 85% of older people with depression receive no help at all from the NHS. Furthermore, those that do receive help are six times more likely than younger people to receive drug treatment rather than alternative support such as talking therapies. Yet research shows that the highest prevalence of depression is found in those over 75, and more generally affects 22% of men and 28% of women aged 65 or over.

### **Stigma and pride re talking about it**

- Nine out of ten respondents to the 2016 Campaign To End Loneliness survey (above) said they were scared to admit they were lonely due to the stigma attached to it.
- A recent survey for the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness found that 57% of older people who identify themselves as lonely admit to never having spoken about it, with around three quarters saying close friends and family would be surprised or astonished to hear they feel lonely. 82% agreed it was easier to talk about loneliness using anonymous confidential services like The Silver Line. (*Gransnet, March 2017*)