



NEWS

24 December 2015

CHARITY BRACED FOR AVALANCHE OF CHRISTMAS CALLS FROM LONELY OLDER PEOPLE

- **Silver Line team manning phone lines . . .**
- **. . . But more volunteers needed to help older people combat isolation**

Silver Line – the free, confidential 24/7 helpline for older people – is getting set for its phones to be buzzing over the Christmas and New Year period.

The helpline operates around-the-clock, 365-days-a-year to provide information and support and already receives a 1,300 calls a day from lonely older people. Founded by Dame Esther Rantzen, it offers friendship and advice, and signposts callers to other resources in their community.

Based on the experience of previous festive seasons, The Silver Line expects to handle more than twice the number of calls over the days around Christmas than on average days for the rest of the year.

Dame Esther Rantzen DBE, Founder of The Silver Line said:

“Like many of our Silver Line callers, I know what loneliness feels like - and Christmas is especially difficult if you are on your own. When my late husband Desmond Wilcox died, I tried to make our family Christmas as joyous as it had always been, but it was impossible.

“In the words of one of our callers, Christmas Day became ‘just another day I had to get through’. We can make this Christmas happier and the start of a much happier New Year.”

Sophie Andrews, CEO of The Silver Line, said:

“Since our launch two years ago, our 24/7 year-round helpline has received 680,000 calls, and this is growing exponentially. We have just had our busiest day with over 1500 calls in one day.

“Over the days around Christmas last year, we handled more than twice the number of calls than on the average day and we expect that could grow even higher this year.

“On Christmas Day, many older people will be getting a call from their Silver Line Friend and for the vast majority that will be the only person they speak to that day

“Our callers The Silver Line are among the hardest to reach older people – for example, those who are confined to their homes through physical or mental disability, or caring for another. Others have found themselves isolated after losing a partner. For these people, the phone can be a lifeline.

“But we also know there are thousands, even millions more that we haven’t yet reached. That’s why we are asking more people to help and volunteer their time – either as a ‘Silver Line Friend’ to chat with an isolated older person, or to support our work through donations or festive fund raising, or spread the word so more people hear about our helpline.”

Running the helpline, training and the cost of all calls are paid for by donations. For example £5 covers the cost of each call that The Silver Line receives, and £50 can recruit and train a volunteer.

As well as Silver Line Friends we also offer:

- Silver Letters: an exchange of regular letters and correspondence between an older person and a volunteer Silver Line Friend;
- Silver Circles: a regular group call on a range of subjects that interest the callers; and
- Silver Line Forums, for those who want to connect online with others who have similar experiences.

The Silver Line Helpline: 0800 4 70 80 90

Website: www.thesilverline.org.uk

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About The Silver Line

- The Silver Line is the UK’s only free, confidential, 24-hour seven-days-a-week, helpline for older people.
- Since being launched nationally in 2013, The Silver Line has received 680,000 calls from lonely older people.
- 68% of calls are after 6pm or at weekends; while 67% of callers contact the helpline because they are lonely or isolated, 88% live alone, and 54% say they have no one else to speak to.
- The Silver Line has recruited and trained more than 2,000 volunteers.
- The Silver Line works in partnership with Age Scotland to deliver the service in Scotland.