



NEWS

7 January 2016

NEW YEAR, OLD PROBLEM – NEW YEAR’S DAY IS BUSIEST EVER FOR HELPLINE THAT COMBATS LONELINESS IN OLDER PEOPLE

- **Over 1,550 callers to Helpline on first day of the year**
- **Now The Silver Line needs 1,000 more volunteers to deal with demand**

Silver Line – the only free, confidential 24/7 helpline for older people – experienced its busiest day ever with 1,550 calls on New Year’s Day.

As families across the country celebrated the start of 2016, for many isolated older people the New Year just highlighted their need for someone to talk to.

The peak of calls means The Silver Line now urgently needs to recruit another 1,000 volunteers across the country to cope with demand for its Silver Line Friends telephone befriending service, in which volunteers make a call each week (from home) to support the most isolated older people.

The Helpline operates around-the-clock, 365-days-a-year to provide information and support for lonely older people. Founded by Dame Esther Rantzen, it offers friendship and advice, and signposts callers to other resources in their community. The Helpline was operating as usual every day over the festive period including Christmas and New Year’s Day.

The 1,550 calls on New Year’s Day 2016 is 500 up on the number received on New Year’s Day in 2015. The helpline received over 10,000 calls in the week running from 28 December into the New Year.

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

“I know what it’s like to feel lonely and so I also know what a difference it makes to be able to speak to a friendly voice.

“Many of the people who call The Silver Line have led fascinating lives but now find themselves alone, often because they have lost a partner or other loved one.

“There’s a big focus on Christmas itself, so families and friends may make a special effort to include older people then, but that can make New Year seem even lonelier by contrast.

“The huge number of calls to The Silver Line on New Year’s Day brings home the truth, that isolation and loneliness are an issue every day of the year for thousands of older people.”

In addition to calls received by the Helpline, Silver Line volunteers and the Helpline team made over 500 phone calls to other lonely and isolated older people on New Year’s Day, who would not otherwise have heard from anyone.

Sophie Andrews, CEO of The Silver Line, said:

“New Year can be a time of reflection and can bring back memories of happier times. But for many older people, it can be hard facing a new year of loneliness.

“We have many lonely or isolated older people who have reached out to us for help and we need more volunteers to become Silver Line Friends.

“It just takes 30 minutes a week to chat with an isolated older person and make a difference – although we know many people build a real friendship that is special to both the volunteer and the older person.

“We provide training for our volunteers and there is no cost to them for the calls which they can make from their own home. To volunteer just call 0800 4 70 80 90 or go to our website www.thesilverline.org.uk”.

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; and
- Silver Circles: a regular group call on a range of subjects that interest the callers.

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 over 710,000 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.