



# NEWS

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## HELPLINE FOR OLDER PEOPLE NAMES UK’S LONELINESS CALLS HOTSPOTS

- Lancashire logs highest number of calls to the charity of any county in the UK
- Two thirds of calls made during the night or weekends
- But charity’s leaders fear for the future without more donations

The Silver Line Helpline for isolated older people has named the loneliness hotspots of Britain.

The charity looked at data from over-one million calls that its helpline received since national launch in November 2013, to pinpoint the areas where calls come from.

It shows that more calls come to the Blackpool-based helpline from lonely older people in Lancashire (38,450) than any other county in the UK, excluding Greater London.

As The Silver Line gets set for even higher number of calls over the Christmas/New Year period, its figures highlight that loneliness among older people crosses communities and North/South divides.

Counties in England – how Lancashire compares *	
County	Number of calls
1. Lancashire	38,450
2. Essex	32,674
3. West Midlands	31,531
4. West Yorkshire	29,891
5. Sussex	24,891
6. Hertfordshire	24,456
7. Kent	23,100
8. Somerset	21,691
9. Surrey	17,465
10. Leicestershire	17,396
*excludes Greater London (75,982 calls to the helpline)	

The Silver Line is the only free, national, confidential helpline open every day and night, offering information, friendship and advice to older people. Two-thirds of calls are made at night-times and weekends – over 700,000 of the calls received by the helpline so far.

The Silver Line's Founder, Dame Esther Rantzen said:

"Every day we hear from lonely older people who have led interesting lives but are now isolated, utterly alone, and literally have no one to speak to for days on end.

"Calls come from virtually everywhere in the UK – places as different as the rural north of Lancashire and urban Burnley – but alike in that older people are experiencing the same loneliness.

"Our figures show there are lonely older people living in every street, in every community, and we know that for many night-times are the worst for them.

"That's why it is vital we are there when no other helpline is available for older people who may be lonely, isolated or confused."

The Silver Line relies entirely on donations to keep the helpline going and pay for friendship calls between volunteer Silver Line Friends and older people.

The growing demand from lonely older people means The Silver Line now needs to raise £1.65 million to pay for the night-time and weekends service. It fears that without more public donations the vital service may have to close.

Chief Executive Sophie Andrews said:

"More and more people are calling us every month – and with the festive period fast approaching we expect the number of callers to rise even higher.

"Some callers want a friendly chat because they are lonely, others are looking for information, with the majority of older people turning to us at night time and weekends.

"For many older people, the early hours are often when they feel the challenge of being all alone.

"Over a quarter of callers (28%) now also say they have been referred to us by other helplines that don't operate at night and weekends."

The Silver Line is asking the public for help in combatting this hidden epidemic of loneliness. Donating just £5 pays for a call to our 24-hour helpline from an older person; while £100 will pay for an older person to be supported for a year.

As well as the helpline, The Silver Line has 3,000 volunteers who make regular friendship calls, or exchange letters with older people. The charity also makes a further 2,500 'keeping in touch' calls every week to isolated older people.

### **For more information contact**

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### **Notes to Editors**

- Data uses area codes only, and excludes numbers that are withheld or made from a mobile, from calls to the helpline since its national launch on 25 November 2013. Call numbers shown are not weighted by population.

- Full list of calls by English counties available

### **About The Silver Line**

- The Silver Line (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.
- The cost of calls to the helpline, and The Silver Line's other friendship services, are paid for by the donations it receives.
- 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.
- More details on The Silver Line website: [www.thesilverline.org.uk](http://www.thesilverline.org.uk)