



NEWS

SURVEY REVEALS OVER HALF OF OLDER PEOPLE ARE SILENT ABOUT LONELINESS

- **A new survey has revealed worrying findings as commission shines spotlight on older generation**
- **Survey conducted by Gransnet for Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness**

A new study conducted by Gransnet – the social networking site for the over 50s – has found that over half (57%) of lonely users say they have never spoken about their loneliness. The vast majority of that number also report that their close friends and family would be ‘quite surprised’ or even ‘astonished’ to hear they feel lonely.

The survey also reveals that 93% of Gransnet users admit it’s possible to feel lonely even when you have a partner or family, with 82% agreeing that talking about feelings of loneliness is much easier when they are online and anonymous.

Results from the study have been published to mark the launch of the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness spotlight on older people – which runs through until 23rd April – and is supported by nine organisations working collaboratively from across the age sector, including The Silver Line.

Under the slogan ‘Start a Conversation’, its aim is to not only raise public awareness of loneliness among older people, but also act as a ‘call to action’ to mobilise individuals and communities help tackle it - whether through talking to a neighbour, visiting an old friend, or just making time for people they meet.

Sophie Andrews, CEO of The Silver Line said:

“The findings of the Gransnet survey sadly, are all too familiar to us – and arguably more widespread among the older people that call us.

“We often hear from the 10,000 older people that call us each week that they are reluctant to admit their feelings - even to their own families. “I don’t want to be a burden” is an all-too frequently used phrase.

“There is a stigma attached to talking about loneliness, more so among the over-55 age group that call us – the proud ‘stiff upper lip’ generation. Yet we also know that reaching out and confiding in someone is a critical – but difficult – first step to breaking down the wall of isolation.

“And that is why The Silver Line was set up: a free, national helpline that older people can call anonymously and in confidence, any time of the day or night, 365 days a year. Our callers often tell us that hearing a human voice is transformational – some have even called us a lifeline.

“In just over three years we’ve taken over 1.3 million calls from lonely older people - and demand for our service keeps growing. This stat alone underlines the prevalence of loneliness among older people and the need for urgent collective action to tackle the problem across our society: as the Commission’s call to action highlights, each and every one of us can play a role as part of the solution.”

Founder of The Silver Line, Dame Esther Rantzen added:

“I had the great pleasure of speaking to Jo Cox about the pain of loneliness affecting the young people who contact Childline, and older people who ring The Silver Line. There is no doubt that it affects physical and mental health, causing vulnerability, illness and even death.

“The vision she had was of all of us working together to try to solve this very serious problem which is growing exponentially. There is no doubt that no one individual or organisation can tackle it effectively alone. We need to work together, to make Jo’s vision a reality.”

Co-chairs of the Commission, Rachel Reeves and Seema Kennedy, said: “Loneliness is a silent epidemic across the UK. Now is the time to break that silence by starting a conversation. We need a national conversation about the scale and impact of the problem. But just as importantly, every single one of us can start a conversation with somebody that will help break the cycle of silent suffering and unintentional neglect.”

Anyone who wants to find out more about the Commission or how they can get involved in tackling loneliness in their community can visit www.jocoxloneliness.org for further information.

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Notes to editors:

About The Silver Line

- The Silver Line (0800 4 70 80 90) is the only free, national and confidential helpline open every day and night, offering information, friendship and advice to older people.
- As well as running the helpline, The Silver Line has 3,000 volunteers who make regular friendship calls or exchange letters with older people.
- 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.
- For further details please visit: www.thesilverline.org.uk

About the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness

- The Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness is working with the following partners – The Silver Line, Action for Children, Age UK, Alzheimer’s Society, The British Red Cross, Campaign to End Loneliness, Carers UK, The Co-op, Eden Project Communities, Independent Age, Refugee Action, Royal Voluntary Service and Sense.

- Throughout 2017, the Commission will focus on the effects of loneliness on loneliness different members of society, including older people, men, people with disabilities, carers, refugees, children and parents.
- For further details please visit: www.jocoxloneliness.org

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