



Change two lives - yours and theirs: Charity celebrates the impact of its volunteers young and old in tackling loneliness and isolation of older people

- Volunteers young and old demonstrate the value of giving their time to charity
- Paula 91 and Mary 19, show that age is just a number when it comes to making a difference
- The Silver Line is calling for others to join the cause and volunteer to change both their lives and the lives of others

03.09.2019 - What do 91-year-old Paula and 19-year-old Mary have in common, apart from the numbers one and nine? The answer is that they both volunteer for The Silver Line because age doesn't matter when you are providing a friendly voice to lonely and isolated older people who have no-one else to speak to.

The Silver Line is a national charity, founded by broadcaster and journalist Dame Esther Rantzen, to tackle the epidemic of loneliness and isolation facing the UK's older population. Among other things, the charity provides a free, confidential Helpline open 24 hours every day of the year, and a telephone friendship service provided by volunteers such as Paula and Mary.

Paula has been a volunteer for The Silver Line for more than five years. Once a week, for the past two years, she has a chat with Meg who is 94. They talk about all sorts of things. "It's nice to know that I am making a difference to Meg's life, but she makes a difference to mine. Our chats lift my mood. It's not much for me to do. Now that I am less mobile, I can't do other volunteering, The Silver Line is a perfect opportunity for me to help other people."

Paula is one of the charities oldest volunteers and demonstrates how valuable the service can be for older people, both as beneficiaries and as volunteers.

On the other hand, at 19 years old Mary Clare is The Silver Line's youngest volunteer telephone friend. Originally from Leigh in Lancashire, Mary is currently studying Social Work at Manchester Met University. Mary was first inspired to volunteer for The Silver Line when she was just 16. She watched an emotional video on Comic Relief about one of The Silver Line's most famous callers, Bob, and says it really "hit a nerve". But after finding out she could not volunteer until she was 18, Mary waited patiently before applying on her 18th birthday!

"I sat through all these other emotional videos throughout the night, but it was Bob's story that left me in floods of tears. I immediately decided to volunteer but I found out that I was too young, so I had to wait until I was 18 to apply. In fact, I still remember applying as it's one of the first things I did on my 18th birthday. I didn't know anything about older people and loneliness when I first watched that video on Comic Relief, but I'm so glad I volunteered as I really enjoy it and get so much out of it."



Mary describes herself as the typical millennial, she loves going to the gym and eating healthy, and is a committed vegetarian. Despite this, she does not notice any barriers with her telephone friend and says the North-South divide is probably more significant than the age gap.

“Everyone is human, no matter their age. At the end of the day we’re just two women having a chat. It’s lovely to hear her stories and she provides me with a different perspective. It really is like a real friendship. Sometimes we’ll have a quick five-minute chat and talk about movies we’ve seen, others we will offload about our problems and talk for much longer. Also, because we’ve been carefully matched, and we both know why we are there, it has never been awkward. We’ve got common interests and we always have lots to chat about.

“A lot of the time I feel like she is the one helping me! She has so much life experience and can give me advice and has helped me to see things from a different perspective.”

Founder of The Silver Line, Dame Esther Rantzen says: “Volunteering transforms the lives both of the volunteers and their beneficiaries. Without them, crucial services would crumble or cease to exist entirely”, she says. “We at The Silver Line need them desperately, they need no previous experience.”

To cope with the growing number of calls that come to the charity The Silver Line is now opening hubs all over the country and needs an army of new volunteers to have a friendly chat with lonely and isolated older people. To find out more visit: <https://www.thesilverline.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering/>

-ENDS-

Notes to editors

About The Silver Line:

- By volunteering for us you can help ensure that older people have someone to turn to no matter what. We urgently need volunteers to make our work possible. Find out more about how to get involved: <https://www.thesilverline.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering/>
- 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 over 2.5 million calls to date
- We now receive over 45,000 calls a month to our helpline. Two thirds of calls we receive are made overnight or at weekends and generally speaking the winter months receive the highest volume of calls.
- The Silver Line also offers personalised, one-to-one friendship services, delivered by an army of around 3000 volunteer Silver Line Friends



- 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
- Just £10 (plus standard network charge) will pay for two calls from a lonely older person to our helpline. To donate £10, please text SILVER to 70660 or [CLICK HERE](#)
- To donate by post, please send a cheque made payable to "The Silver Line" to The Silver Line, Trade Tower, Calico Row, London SW11 3YH.
- It's also quick and easy to donate by phone using a debit or credit card. Please call 020 7224 2020 Monday to Friday (9am to 5.30pm).
- More details on The Silver Line website: www.thesilverline.org.uk