



NEWS RELEASE

Immediate release

Contact: Laura Ferguson, 07554 882070

Work together to combat loneliness and reduce health costs

A nationwide campaign is calling for more local collaboration between the statutory and third sectors to reduce loneliness among older people, which in turn could reduce health costs. This call comes as the Campaign to End Loneliness and the Centre for Social Justice work together to host the “Vital Connections” conference on 15 November 2011.

The Rural Coffee Caravan Information Project in Suffolk, one of the Campaign’s supporters, provides an example of how working together locally can be achieved. Today, 15 November, the Caravan is at Hitcham Village Hall, ensuring that people living in this rural area receive friendship through coffee, tea and homemade cakes, along with essential information about local organisations and the services they offer. The Rural Coffee Caravan Information Project works closely with statutory services and other local groups to ensure it can offer local people access to the information they need to stay connected.

Laura Ferguson, Director of the Campaign to End Loneliness stressed the need to prioritise such local services that can prevent loneliness and therefore reduce further health complications: “If you live on your own you can become lonely over time and, alarmingly, you are more likely to become ill and need more intensive health and social care support. Loneliness should be better understood and prioritised by all those providing support or contact to people in local areas,

including health providers. Reducing loneliness is likely to reduce the vulnerability of older people and further health costs.”

Andrew Barnett, Director, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation UK, said: “Those working with older people already recognise the importance of tackling loneliness – nearly 12% of older people in the United Kingdom feel trapped in their own home and some 200,000 older people in the UK receive no help to get out of their house or flat. We are delighted that the Campaign to End Loneliness and the Centre for Social Justice are together furthering the call to develop better links at the local level between statutory providers who often come into contact with the most isolated older people, and charities who are well-equipped and experienced at delivering personalised support.”

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the Campaign

The Campaign to End Loneliness aims to maintain and create connections in older age and was launched in 2011 by four founder partners: Age UK Oxfordshire, Counsel and Care, Independent Age and WRVS. It is funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Two upcoming pieces of work by the Campaign will pursue this theme of working together to combat loneliness: the results from the baseline survey of the Campaign are being released on 1 December and The Campaign is working with the Local Government Association’s Ageing Well programme to put together a briefing sheet for local authorities on what they can do to tackle the loneliness that is experienced by many older people.

More information can be found at: www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk

Research and health

Loneliness is bad for your health. Researchers rate loneliness and social isolation as a comparable risk to lifelong smoking (Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB (2010) 'Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review', PLoS Med 7(7): e1000316).

Being at home alone for increasingly long periods during the day is identified as a risk factor in becoming more isolated and lonely over time – from Wenger, GC and Burholt, V (2004).

Changes in levels of social isolation and loneliness among older people in a rural area: a twenty-year longitudinal study. Canadian Journal on Aging, 23(2): 115–27

The risk factors and health implications of loneliness are set out in the launch publication of the Campaign to End Loneliness' 2011 report *Safeguarding the Convoy – A call to action from the Campaign to End Loneliness*. For a copy, contact

laura@campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk

About the Rural Caravan Coffee Information Project

The Campaign to End Loneliness has over 75 supporters, all of these organisations work in some way to combat loneliness. One of these supporters is the Rural Coffee Caravan Information Project in Suffolk which is a small community project in working to combat rural isolation. Their mobile caravan visits villages with few or no amenities and offers a free café, usually set up on the village green, and access to a wealth of information aimed at improving quality of life e.g. health, benefits, support groups and local organisations. They work closely with the agencies offering these service and their volunteers chat with visitors and introduce those that haven't met with the aim of building community spirit and cohesion and reducing loneliness. In addition, they offer to help communities set up their own groups and also visit other coffee mornings and lunch clubs to offer access to the information. For more details please contact us using these details.

For more information see: www.ruralcoffeecaravan.org.uk

Background to the Campaign to End Loneliness

The founder partners below recognise the importance of working together and with others to combat loneliness: a complex, very personal and often hidden issue which has knock on effects across health and wider society.

Independent Age is a unique and growing charity, providing information, advice and support for thousands of older people across the UK and the Republic of Ireland. It has recently merged with two other older people's charities, *Counsel and Care* and *Universal Beneficent Society*, to provide a broader range of services than any of the charities could provide separately. The merged charity, which is called Independent Age, provides:

- An information and advice service for older people, their families and carers, focusing on three vital areas:
 - Social care, including care at home, in hospital and residential care
 - Welfare benefits
 - Befriending services and other social support.

This national information and advice is integrated with:

- Local support, including:
 - Practical help with forms, assessments and other issues
 - One to one and group befriending schemes

We use the knowledge we gain from providing our services to help influence policy and practice. For more information visit www.independentage.org

WRVS provides practical help through the power of volunteering, so older people can stay independent and live the way they want. WRVS is one of the largest volunteering charities in Britain powered by 45,000 volunteers who regularly provide practical help to over 100,000 older people in their homes, communities, hospitals and during emergencies. To find out about volunteering with WRVS visit www.wrvs.org.uk

Age UK Oxfordshire is an independent local charity with over 40 years of experience in promoting the well-being of older people throughout the county of Oxfordshire, and helping to make later life a fulfilling and enjoyable experience. To find out about more visit <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire/>

The Campaign is supported by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, which is an international charitable foundation with cultural, educational, social and scientific interests. Based in Lisbon with branches in London and Paris, the Foundation is in a privileged position to support transnational work tackling contemporary issues in Europe. The purpose of the UK Branch in London is to connect and enrich the experiences of individuals, families and communities with a special interest in supporting those who are most disadvantaged. In 2008, the Foundation launched an initiative on ageing and social cohesion. Our support of the Campaign to End Loneliness represents a core development of our work in this area which we hope will contribute to a growing understanding of the impact of demographic ageing on our society. For more information about the work of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in the UK please visit www.gulbenkian.org.uk