

Loneliness and its threat to health have once again hit the headlines, with three new pieces of research released last month. From a study of European Social Survey data by WRVS and Demos, we learnt that the United Kingdom performed poorly on experience of ageing and that loneliness and “lacking somebody to confide in” are a particular problem for our older population.

The Archives of Internal Medicine in America published two new studies, which found loneliness could **increase the risk of death by almost 10 per cent** and people who live alone are more likely to die from heart attacks and strokes.

This new research adds to a growing understanding of the negative health impacts of loneliness, and adds urgency to our call for those responsible for health in the UK to take action on the issue of loneliness in older age.

So our launch next month of our **toolkit for health and wellbeing boards** to support councils and health commissioners in tackling the issue is increasingly well-timed. We hope that all our supporters will join us in raising awareness of the health consequences of loneliness, and asking their council to take action.

## In the News

**The Ageing Across Europe report from WRVS and Demos received considerable coverage.**

The Daily Mail ran the story as “[Britain is shamed by Europe over lonely and neglected elderly](#)” whilst the Telegraph opted for “[Elderly Britons loneliest in Europe, study suggests](#)”.

The report created an ‘Experiences of Ageing Matrix’ and compared the UK with Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. The UK demonstrated the lowest score for loneliest and ranked third on the ‘having someone to confide in’ indicator.

**Loneliness can ‘shorten your life and make every day activities a struggle’** The [Daily Mail](#) was one of a number of international news outlets covering the new Archives of Internal Medicine studies on loneliness, and the impact of living alone on heart conditions.

The first study, from the University of California, found loneliness could increase the risk of death by almost 10 per cent. On the basis of the research, [Dr Carla Perissinotto](#) argued:

*“Asking about chronic diseases is not enough...there’s much more going on in people’s homes and their communities that is affecting their health. If we don’t ask about it, we are missing a very important and independent risk factor.”*

**Survey highlights crisis of care for the elderly:** a survey conducted by the trade union Unison has found 57% of social care workers have seen day centre closures, with two-thirds of survey respondents also reporting increased charges for attendance. Heather Wakefield, Unison’s head of local government, argued this was a false economy as:

*“For elderly people, day centres guard against loneliness. Their loss is devastating. Research has revealed loneliness to be as deadly as smoking, alcohol or obesity for a person's health, so these cuts could cost lives.”*

## Campaign News

**Loneliness and isolation: a toolkit for health and wellbeing boards:** The Campaign to End Loneliness has developed a digital toolkit for health and wellbeing boards to inspire them to take action to tackle loneliness and social isolation in older age. The new toolkit will support them to better understand, identify and commission interventions for the issue of loneliness in older age.

Paul Burstow will be launching this toolkit at the ‘What do we know about loneliness?’ research conference in Oxford on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of July. The toolkit will be online and available for use on the day of its launch.

This international conference will bring the latest research on the threat to health as well as social research into loneliness. It will be of interest to charities, public health professionals, local government, government departments and researchers. There are a few places still available for the conference, see [our conference page](#) for more details.

**Our first two local campaigns are in Cornwall and Essex have been launched:** our campaign’s officer, Marianne Symons, has met with a range of interested campaigners across the two counties and on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June we held our first campaign strategy meeting in Truro.

We will be launching a country-wide campaign, ‘Loneliness Harms Health’, later in the year as the next stage of this initial work and will then invite all of our supporters to campaign with us – so sign up now on our [website](#) as a local campaigner.

A summary from the Cornwall meeting, and a discussion of campaign tactics, can be found on our blog [here](#).

If you would be interested in getting involved with this work in Cornwall and Essex, you can contact Marianne on [marianne@campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk](mailto:marianne@campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk)

**Recent speaking engagements have included audiences with health and wellbeing boards.** Laura spoke at the 'Living Well, Ageing Well' Central Bedfordshire Council conference on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June and with Merton Health and Wellbeing Board representatives alongside Age UK and the local Merton Seniors’ Forum last month. Future speaking engagements include Cheshire East and Warrington Ageing Well programme.

**Don’t forget to check our Blog, which is regularly updated:** Over the past month we had a post from Think Dementia Community Care for [Dementia Awareness Week](#) and an eloquent

and personal piece from Daphne Berkovi, on her experience of loneliness and isolation as a carer, for [Carers Week](#).

**The Spring edition of the Campaign to End Loneliness Research Bulletin was released last month:** the next copy will be released after the research conference in July. The Research Bulletin is only sent to supporters, so [sign-up here](#) to receive your copy.

## Your news on tackling loneliness

**Dance in Dementia are offering free training workshops for volunteers or staff** that work with people with dementia to learn about their adapted form of circle dance. Dementia sufferers often experience loneliness and these groups provide both exercise and a chance to reduce isolation. More information about the workshops can be found at [www.circledanceindementia.com/workshops.html](http://www.circledanceindementia.com/workshops.html)

**WRVS are on the hunt for Diamond Champions** – volunteers over the age of 60 who are making an extraordinary difference to their community. They don't have to be part of WRVS and can be volunteering for any organisation. For more information and a nomination form, see: <http://www.wrvs.org.uk/get-involved/diamond-champions>

**A new social enterprise Uniitee** has soft-launched their new home sharing scheme with this animated video. Starting in Cheshire East, Uniitee will match older home-owners with spare rooms and wanting a little bit of support to stay independent with people looking for accommodation. For more information see: <http://youtu.be/DbsrJCteKCM>

Best wishes,

Laura, Marianne & Anna