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You could brighten local older people's lives this winter.

Independent local charity Age UK Oxfordshire putting a call out for volunteers for its telephone befriending service, Phone Friends.

We can all feel lonely sometimes, but prolonged and/or intense experiences of loneliness can have negative impacts on both our physical and mental health. Loneliness can increase the risk of early mortality by 26%, increase risk of poor mental health and is associated with elevated blood pressure and acute stress responses*.

With 1 in 5 older people in Oxfordshire reporting feeling lonely** and as we move into winter with colder and shorter days heightening feelings of loneliness and isolation, Age UK Oxfordshire's Phone Friends service is needed more than ever.

Currently over 375 people receive a free, weekly telephone call from their friendly Phone Friend, but there are thousands more older people who could benefit from the service.

Volunteer telephone befrienders really brighten the lives of older people feeling lonely or isolated. An older person recently supported said, "It's just what I needed to help stop me from feeling lonely." and other said of their Phone Friend, "You always lift my spirits".

Volunteering as a Phone Friend requires a minimum commitment of 1 hour per week which enables you to call up to 3 people and can be at a regular time that suits you. Calls can be made from the comfort of your own home and any expenses for call costs are covered.

If you're friendly and feel comfortable talking whilst also providing a listening ear, you could bring comfort and friendship to local older people this winter. To register your interest in supporting Age UK Oxfordshire's campaign to reduce loneliness amongst local older people, please call 01295 234 850 or email phonefriends@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire for more information.

* www.campaigntoendloneliness.org

**23% of those 50-64 and 19% of those 75+ report feeling lonely sometimes or always (Oxfordshire data from 2021 Census).

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Editor's notes

About Age UK Oxfordshire

Age UK Oxfordshire is an independent local charity supporting over 30,000 older people per year in Oxfordshire to maintain their independence and live life to the full. We focus most resource on tackling inequality and reaching older people who face a struggle, whether through low income, poor health or isolation and loneliness

Our services include local information, advice and support, practical assistance, and social, creative and physical activities. We also campaign on the issues that matter to people in later life.

We work with our national partner, Age UK, and our local Age UK partners in England.

You can find further information on all our services and volunteering opportunities by telephoning 0345 450 1276 or by visiting our website: www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire

Age UK Oxfordshire is a charitable company limited by guarantee (registered charity number 1091529 and company number 4328143). For all media enquiries please contact Emma Duckett on 07799 051682 or email media@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk.