

No one should have no one – A Living Room in Bonn Square

With approximately 11,000 older people in Oxfordshire being regularly lonely, Age UK Oxfordshire has launched its third winter campaign to combat the epidemic of loneliness.

In our third year of the campaign, Age UK Oxfordshire is creating a 'live' living room scene in Bonn Square, outside the new Westgate Shopping Centre in Oxford. This scene, with local older actors, will represent an older person being completely alone on Christmas Day – the reality for thousands of people aged 65 and over across Oxfordshire. There will also be scheduled poetry readings by older actors from a local professional theatre group, *Living the Drama*.

Age UK Oxfordshire wants to raise awareness and funds for those who need support. This event will run on Saturday 16th December between 10am and 4pm. Please contact Sophie Dyer to register your interest as a member of the media.

As well as this having detrimental effects on mental health including being more prone to depression (Cacioppo et al, 2006), there are physical consequences of social isolation. In fact, loneliness is associated with an increased risk of developing coronary heart disease and stroke (Valtorta et al, 2016). Furthermore, research suggests that loneliness is as damaging to our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day (Holt-Lunstad, 2015).

But loneliness is preventable. Age UK Oxfordshire works hard to tackle loneliness through a programme of interlinked activities that reach out to older people who have become isolated. One way that Age UK Oxfordshire works to combat loneliness is through our Phone Friends service – an unfunded telephone befriending service. Currently over 280 of the most lonely and isolated people in Oxfordshire are receiving at least one call a week from one of our 45 caring and friendly volunteers.

Our Phone Friends are some of the loneliest and isolated people in society, house-bound or even bed-bound, unable to take advantage of other services such as lunch clubs or activities and often feeling forgotten and overlooked as a result.

It is vital that this service, the Information and Advice line and other Age UK Oxfordshire services receive funds in order to continue. As you can imagine, one phone call from a phone friend can be a lifeline.

Penny Thewlis, Age UK Oxfordshire's Chief Executive, is passionate about combating loneliness. She said: "For many of those in later life, loneliness is an everyday experience. Chronic loneliness is debilitating both physically and emotionally but it can be prevented."

Because Age UK Oxfordshire is a local independent charity, all the money we raise directly supports people in Oxfordshire. We need to raise an extra £5,000 because we know that there are over 11,000 people aged over 65 who regularly feel lonely.

There are many ways you can help to combat loneliness:

- Simply text **AUKO99 £10 to 70070** to donate £10 or whatever you would like to give.
- Donate **online** via our Just Giving page
<https://www.justgiving.com/campaigns/charity/ageukoxfordshire/noone2017>

- Post a **cheque** to Age UK Oxfordshire, 9 Napier Court, Barton Lane, Abingdon, OX14 3YT

£10 would enable our Phone Friends volunteers to make 5 friendly calls to isolated and vulnerable older people.

£30 would provide opportunities for 3 older people facing the future following the loss of a loved one to find friendship in a support group.

£60 would provide 3 isolated people with expert information and advice that helps connect them to people, activities and friendship locally.

Together we can help everyone Love Later Life.

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Editor's notes

About Age UK Oxfordshire

Age UK Oxfordshire is an independent local charity dedicated to giving older people in Oxfordshire comfort, support and opportunities to have a life.

We provide free local information, advice and support; commercial products and services; and research and 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. Our work focuses on five key areas: money matters, health and well being, home and care, work and training and leisure and lifestyle.

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 or to register your interest in attending the loneliness event, please contact Sophie Dyer on 07827 235405 or email media@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk.

About Living the Drama

Living the Drama is a not-for-profit professional theatre company, based in Oxford, and created to inspire people, of all ages, ability and experience, to achieve their potential through the creative use of drama and poetry. We encourage new playwriting and develop drama-based workshops which challenge society's prejudices and judgemental assumptions.

You can find out more about Living the Drama on their website www.livingthedrama.co.uk or contact Carolyn Lloyd-Davies via carolyn@livingthedrama.co.uk or 077 822 59471.