**1 October 2019**

**For immediate release:**

**NATIONAL INITIATIVE, “SILVER SUNDAY”, SEEKS TO TACKLE LONELINESS BY RECONNECTING OLDER PEOPLE IN THE UK WITH THEIR COMMUNITIES**

* **On** [**Silver Sunday**](https://silversunday.org.uk/) **(Sunday 6 October), communities, organisations, businesses and volunteers across the UK will stage more than 1,000 free events and activities for older people at risk of social isolation**
* **Now in its eighth year, Silver Sunday coincides with calls from the** [**Loneliness Action Group**](https://www.redcross.org.uk/shadowreport#Key%20findings) **for long-term action on the impact of loneliness**
* **According to** [**new research**](https://bemoreus.org.uk/these-simple-things-can-help-you-feel-more-connected-in-your-community/)**, 91% of UK adults think small moments of connection can make a difference to people feeling lonely**

Belly dancing, walking football, IT workshops and Mad Hatter’s tea parties are amongst more than 1,000 events to be staged around the UK this weekend (5-6 October) to help combat social isolation amongst older people.

[Silver Sunday](https://silversunday.org.uk/)is an annual day of fun and free activities for older people across the UK which aims to bring people together and change the story about loneliness. Led by The [Sir Simon Milton Foundation](http://www.sirsimonmiltonfoundation.com), it celebrates the value and knowledge which older people contribute to our communities while combating social isolation. Everyone can get involved, whether that’s organising an event, spreading the word, attending an activity or simply doing something kind for an elderly neighbour.

This year, Silver Sunday falls just days after the publication of [a new report](https://www.redcross.org.uk/shadowreport#Key%20findings) from the Loneliness Action Group, a network of over 50 national organisations working together to advance the issue of tackling loneliness and social isolation. The report acknowledges what the government has achieved over the last year. However, with a change in leadership, there are concerns whether loneliness will continue to be prioritised and given the funding and resources it needs. It urges the government to take efforts to the next level, to ensure the loneliness agenda remains a firm priority to maintain momentum and deliver the ambition that lead to the creation of the Loneliness Strategy.

Silver Sunday is a member of the [Loneliness Action Group](https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/action-on-loneliness) ­and is an exemplar of what can be achieved when we all play our part, as neighbours, relatives, friends, employers and volunteers. Partner organisations running Silver Sunday events this year include [Contact The Elderly](https://www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk/), [Age UK](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/), [Chelsea FC Foundation](https://www.chelseafc.com/en/foundation), [The Friendly Bench](https://www.thefriendlybench.co.uk/) and the [UK Men’s Sheds Association](https://menssheds.org.uk/). Nearly 400 care homes around the country are staging Silver Sunday events on a large scale, including Bupa, which is running tea dances and quiz nights, HC-One, which has organised over 200 Harvest Festivals, and RCH which is putting on socials themed around The Great Gatsby, The Greatest Showman, Mary Poppins, for example. Similarly, dozens of local authorities are supporting Silver Sunday activities this year, including [Sevenoaks District Council](https://silversunday.org.uk/organiser/sevenoaks-district-council/), which is running events for the first time.

Christabel Flight is Founder of [Silver Sunday](http://www.silversunday.org.uk) and a Trustee of the [Sir Simon Milton Foundation](http://www.sirsimonmiltonfoundation.com). She says:

“This year, there is a significant increase in the number of intergenerational activities, with schools and youth clubs around the country getting involved. We’re thrilled that [The Scout Association](https://scouts.org.uk/home/) has launched a [new Silver Sunday Scout badge](https://silversunday.org.uk/the-new-silver-sunday-scout-badge/) to recognise the part its scout groups are playing. It’s also wonderful to see a growth in activities that are dementia-friendly, ones welcoming families affected by cancer - and even phone-based activities for those who are house-bound.

“There are also many more Silver Sunday events celebrating the cultural diversity of our communities, including activities at the [Japanese](https://silversunday.org.uk/event/tsubasa-childrens-choir-at-japan-house-2/), [Hungarian](https://silversunday.org.uk/event/afternoon-tea-at-the-embassy-of-hungary/) and [Brazilian](https://silversunday.org.uk/event/silver-day-a-melhor-idade/) Embassies in London. There’s even a [talk on ‘witches and cunning folk’](https://silversunday.org.uk/event/witches-cunning-folk/) being held in Newcastle on Saturday – and we kick off with a [five-hour ‘dance-a-thon’](https://silversunday.org.uk/event/dance-a-thon/) in west London on Friday covering Bollywood, salsa, ballet and line dancing, which will certainly redefine stereotypes around older age!”

Christabel Flight points to [new research](https://bemoreus.org.uk/these-simple-things-can-help-you-feel-more-connected-in-your-community/) revealing 91% of us think that small moments of connection, like saying hello on the bus, or smiling at someone in the street, can make a difference to someone who is feeling lonely. The research, conducted by YouGov, for the [Campaign to End Loneliness](https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/), also suggests that nearly 4 out of 5 adults feel there is less of a sense of community in the UK than there was 20 years ago.

Christabel says:

“Year on year, we are seeing fantastic growth in people running Silver Sunday events as well as those wishing to attend – but there is still more we can all do. We urge you to invite your older neighbours, friends or family to one of our events. And if you can’t do that, please just drop in on an older neighbour, make them a cup of tea or better still bake them a cake!

“We believe in that by highlighting and combating the issue of social isolation with great vigour on one day a year, we will all be inspired to do more to celebrate and connect with older people the rest of the year as well. We have it in our power to change the story on loneliness and ensure the elderly live more fulfilling and healthier lives.”

For further information, or to attend or film an event, please contact Georgina Creighton on 020 7641 5404 or email [gcreighton@silversunday.org.uk](mailto:gcreighton@silversunday.org.uk) For a full programme of events being held this year as part of Silver Sunday, please see <https://silversunday.org.uk/>

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

Christabel Flight and members of the Silver Sunday team are available for interview.

For a taste of what to expect on Silver Sunday, please see [this short film](https://silversunday.org.uk/creating-new-moments-of-connection/) of our 2018 event featuring supporter Will Young and participants including Margaret, one of many people for whom Silver Sunday has made a huge difference.

Silver Sunday is a flagship initiative of the [Sir Simon Milton Foundation](http://www.sirsimonmiltonfoundation.com), which works to continue Simon Milton’s vision of a society in which communities care, the young aspire, and older people thrive. The mission of the Sir Simon Milton Foundation is to provide opportunities in education and training for the young and for older people to feel valued for their contribution to their communities.

The [Loneliness Action Group](https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/action-on-loneliness) is a network of over 50 national organisations working together to advance the issue of tackling loneliness and social isolation. Currently led by the British Red Cross and Co-op partnership, the group was tasked by the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness partners with securing a legacy for the Commission’s work. Today, the Group brings together leaders from the public, private and voluntary sectors working nationally on loneliness. It has played a role in driving forward crucial developments, including contributing to the development of the Loneliness Strategy. The group launched its shadow report, [*“A connected society? Assessing progress in tackling loneliness”*](https://www.redcross.org.uk/shadowreport)*,* on 19 September 2019.

-ENDS-