



MAYOR OF LONDON

press release

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Mayor of London supports London's isolated and older residents

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, today called on Londoners to volunteer their time through his Team London programme to help vulnerable, lonely neighbours, as he joined a Contact the Elderly tea party supporting isolated older people in the capital.

Recent research* shows at least 75,000 people, over the age of 75, are living lonely lives in London, and that this problem is only set to grow, as the number of Londoners over the age of 90 is predicted to increase by 95 per cent over the next 20 years.

This morning, the Mayor joined a Contact the Elderly volunteer driver to collect a party guest, going on to join his Street Party Ambassador and community tsar Barbara Windsor for the tea party at a volunteer's home in Islington.

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said: "I believe London is the best big city in the world, and yet a worrying number of its older people are isolated from its many advantages. Today I am encouraging all Londoners, whatever their age, to give up their time, roll up their sleeves and get involved - offering the warmth, friendship and support that is missing from the lives of the lonely and vulnerable. Through Team London, my volunteering programme, we have already generated 63,000 volunteers across the city. I hope many more will sign up to help others in 2012, by offering their time, their skills, or like, this morning, a cup of tea and a chat, so that London can be a fantastic city for everyone who lives in it."

Contact the Elderly's gatherings (which normally take place on a Sunday) are supported by a network of volunteer drivers, who collect the older guests and accompany them, and volunteer hosts who hold tea parties in their homes.

Volunteer driver, Henry Nicholls, aged 27, said: "Following the death of my grandfather, I wanted to spend time with other older people, who don't have family

and friends for company. I learn a lot from the older generation and love listening to their stories. It would be nice to think that when I'm older, I will have visitors coming to see me. Volunteering is incredibly rewarding and doesn't involve a huge time commitment.”

Richard, 84, the older guest collected by the Mayor, said: “I enjoy the opportunity to get out and dress up in my Sunday best. I would really miss the tea parties if I didn't attend them. I've got to know all the other guests and volunteers and we have a good laugh together.”

Recent research among the Contact the Elderly guests demonstrates how beneficial the tea parties are, with 86 per cent feeling less lonely as a result of the service, over 80 per cent now feeling part of a community again and 95 per cent having made friends with the volunteers.

Founder and Chairman of Contact the Elderly, Trevor Lyttleton MBE, who originally set up the charity in Marylebone and also attended today's tea party, said: “We are delighted to welcome Boris Johnson to one of our monthly tea parties. Contact the Elderly has been in existence for almost 50 years and in that time we've helped over 100,000 older people in the UK and have arranged over a million individual outings for lonely elderly people. Our volunteer numbers must continue to grow so we can extend our reach to even more isolated older people.”

The Contact the Elderly tea party took place in the Borough of Islington, with eight older people and several volunteers attending. There are almost 80 Contact the Elderly groups spanning all London boroughs, supporting 600 older guests with the help of over 1,200 volunteers. Over the course of the next year, Contact the Elderly plans to open at least 16 new groups in London, enabling it to support an additional 150 lonely older people living in the capital. But to do this the charity needs more volunteers.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. TEAM LONDON

Team London is the Mayor's ambitious programme to mobilise an army of volunteers across the capital to improve life in London through programmes aimed at reducing crime, increasing youth opportunities and improving quality of life by cleaning, greening and building stronger neighbourhoods. Launched this year, Team London is seeking to encourage an additional 10,000 volunteers by May 2012. Visit www.london.gov.uk/teamlondon for more information, to find and post volunteering opportunities, and to nominate your volunteering heroes for a certificate of recognition from the Mayor of London.

In October this year, the Mayor delivered almost £600,000 in Team London Small Grants, of up to £10,000 each, to around 60 organisations that rely on volunteers, after a recent survey revealed that over half of voluntary organisations in London had had to close some services in a 12 month period.

The Small Grants Fund is designed to help organisations that use volunteers to meet local needs but which may not be typically appropriate for large scale or mainstream funding. Through Team London the Mayor has committed to generating an additional

10,000 volunteering opportunities by next spring. The vast majority of Small Grant recipients would welcome elderly volunteers and there are many projects that build stronger neighbourhoods, including enhancing social opportunities, improving green spaces, and communicating with all ages locally. The following Small Grant projects specifically support older Londoners in terms of their care:

Abbey Community Centre – Kilburn Neighbours in Camden – Volunteers providing support to around 20 housebound and vulnerable elderly people - including regular visits, escorting them to medical and other appointments, and helping with practical tasks such as window cleaning and gardening – in order to help them to continue living independently and in their own homes.

Bold Vision Limited - Telegraph Hill Builders - This project will provide the catalyst for engaging a greater diversity of volunteers from the community to take part in building a Community Café, which will in turn serve more people including the elderly community within and around the Telegraph Hill ward in Lewisham.

Entelechy Arts – Creative Ageing Volunteers - Older volunteers to design and implement a programme that supports the participation of isolated elderly members of the community in cultural and social activities, helping them build sustainable relationships with their local arts and cultural organisations. (Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark).

Carl Campbell Dance Company 7 in Southwark – Recycled Teenagers Voluntary Action Team (RTVATeam). The RTVATeam includes adults and older people over the age of 60 who will facilitate the project, enabling, encouraging and providing access for older people to participate in creative and physical activity.

Read Together – Open Book - This project will set up and deliver volunteer-led therapeutic reading groups for older people with mental health issues in Barking & Dagenham, Hackney and Newham.

FoodCycle - Pie in the Sky Café – Volunteers will work in Community Café, which reclaims surplus food from supermarkets and uses it to cook healthy and nutritious and low-cost meals for the local community, including the elderly, in Tower Hamlets.

The Mayor's Team London flagship volunteering programme has also provided £200,000 to fund the recruitment and training of nearly 400 young volunteers through Age UK London's MiCommunity digital inclusion project helping the over 60s get online. (Enfield, Hackney, Haringey' Kensington and Chelsea, Barnet, Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham, Westminster, Newham, Harrow).

This year has been the fourth year of the Mayor's 'Know Your Rights' campaign to help older people and their carers in London access the financial help they are entitled to but don't necessarily know about or how to access.

In total the Mayor's Team London programme has now funded over 160 projects of varying sizes from large scale operations to smaller groups across London. In addition, many organisations are now posting their volunteering opportunities on the Team London website. For more information go to: <http://www.london.gov.uk/bills>

2. CONTACT THE ELDERLY

Trevor Lyttleton MBE, Founder and Chairman of Contact the Elderly, established the charity in Marylebone, London in 1965, at the age of 29.

Contact the Elderly is a national charity, which aims to relieve the acute loneliness and isolation of very elderly people in the UK who live alone, without family, friends or other support networks nearby.

The Contact the Elderly model is based on a simple yet very effective concept: free, monthly Sunday afternoon tea parties for small groups of older people and other volunteers within their community - which bring all ages together, develops fulfilling friendships and support networks, and gives everyone something to look forward to. Contact the Elderly currently has over 410 groups in England, Scotland and Wales, which provide a regular, consistent and vital friendship link every month to over 3,300 older people, aged 75 and above.

There are currently almost 5,300 volunteers supporting the groups: volunteer drivers collect the older guests from their homes and accompany them to tea parties, while volunteer hosts hold the tea parties in their homes.

By 2015, the charity's 50th anniversary, Contact the Elderly aims to increase the number of groups it operates to over 600, enabling the charity to support over 5,000 older people each month – with the support of a volunteer network of over 7,500 individuals.

For more information about Contact the Elderly in London, or to become a guest of a group, please contact 0800 716543 or email info@contact-the-elderly.org.uk.

Volunteers can sign up to volunteer with Contact the Elderly by visiting www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk.

3. INFORMATION ON LONELINESS AMONGST OLDER LONDONERS:

*Loneliness among older Londoners: The Institute for Public Policy Research published Social isolation among older Londoners, on 11th October 2011 which shows older Londoners are socially isolated, with at least 75,000 people, over the age of 75, facing lonely lives in the city.

http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2011/10/social-isolation_Oct2011_8060.pdf

Almost one in five people, over the age of 75, living in London see friends or relatives less than once a week (Census 2001)

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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