



**CONTACT  
THE ELDERLY**

# **IMPACT REPORT**

**2016-17**

**COMBATTING LONELINESS AMONGST  
ISOLATED OLDER PEOPLE**





# Contents



Looking Back	1
A Silent Epidemic: Why Our Work Is Needed	2
Loneliness Replaced With Friendship	4
Conversation, Companionship And A Cuppa	5
A Caring Community	6
Tea With The GP	8
More Than Just A Tea Party	9
Making Loneliness A Shared Problem	11
Filling Up The Teapot	14
Accounts	17
A National Charity With A Local Touch	18
Looking Forward	19





Contact the Elderly exists to relieve the loneliness affecting older people, one of society's most pressing issues. Since 1965 Contact the Elderly has sought to address this issue with the simple solution of monthly Sunday afternoon tea parties. Over 50 years later and with the support of over 10,000 volunteers throughout England, Scotland and Wales, the positive impact of Contact the Elderly's simple hand of friendship is more significant than ever.

As a volunteer myself, I know just how rewarding the tea parties are for everyone involved. The care and dedication of all our volunteers brings vital human contact and friendship back into the lives of the older people we help, while the context of a monthly tea party allows guests to mark an event into an otherwise empty or sparse calendar. In many cases firm friendships form that go far beyond the one-Sunday-a-month gathering, with the long-term nature of groups creating lasting bonds between young and old. Crucially, our guests also report improvements in health and wellbeing as a direct result of joining our service.

Over the last few years, Contact the Elderly has seen substantial growth in our income, presence and service delivery. This is a testament to how our profile has grown and the great support our work receives from our network, corporate organisations and the general public. Alongside these successes, there is the challenge of an increasingly ageing society and the growing need for our service to reach ever more communities across the UK.

2016-17 marked an important milestone in Contact the Elderly's development, as our number of volunteers climbed to over 10,000. We also launched a record number of new groups – 118 over the course of the year – reaching out to more than 5,500 older people each month. The renewed focus on finding this hard-to-reach group of people saw our “Be Our Guest” campaign delivering results, in the form of both a large increase in older people and volunteers.

This year also saw NBFA Assisting the Elderly [previously known as the National Benevolent Fund for the Aged] agree to a merger with Contact the Elderly. It is a testament to our simple, effective and focused service that a charity with such a strong heritage in caring for the elderly and vulnerable made this decision; we are really looking forward to our combined resources accelerating the development of our service.

Christian Grobel, Chair, Contact the Elderly

# A Silent Epidemic: Why Our Work Is Needed



As people grow older, they can become invisible in society. Issues such as illness, reduced mobility or bereavement can significantly affect their ability to leave home, socialise and feel part of the community. A lack of family nearby, dissolving care services and the disappearance of community spaces can exacerbate this.

The detrimental effects of loneliness on both mental and physical health have been well-documented. Depression, anxiety and a lack of confidence are just some of the health problems that plague lonely and socially isolated people. This was further highlighted through our own research, revealing that 76% of Contact the Elderly guests find Sundays to be the loneliest day of the week.

Older people who are still able to get out and buy a local newspaper, or call to ask for help, can self-refer to the service. However, our main challenge is reaching the older people who are not able to do this. The hidden million that have little to no human interaction and spend weeks upon weeks within their four walls, usually with the television as their only company. Many are simply unaware that our service exists or lack the confidence to make the first step and ask for help.



# A Silent Epidemic: Why Our Work Is Needed 🍵🍶🍵

We work closely with healthcare professionals who can directly refer their older patients to our service. Our service has been proven to be an effective form of social prescribing, simultaneously relieving pressure on the healthcare sector and helping older people to re-engage with their community. 55% of Contact the Elderly guests say their general health and wellbeing has improved since attending our tea parties.

## Why We Are Needed:

- Our service is completely free. This means anyone, regardless of their economic situation, can come along to afternoon tea
- Our tea parties always take place on Sundays. This is when many other services and organisations do not operate
- Door-to-door transport is provided. This is essential for older people who struggle with reduced mobility and cannot navigate public transport
- Regularity of the group. The same people meet each month, meaning a sense of regularity which allows friendships to blossom

“ Contact the Elderly is a superb organisation from every angle: it gets you out of the house, it gives you the opportunity to meet new people and for people like me, living on their own, it's so important. ”

**Gladys, 82**



We currently help 5,500 older people across the UK, but we know this is just the tip of the iceberg. We are committed to expanding our reach and helping those older people who would benefit from our service.

# Loneliness Replaced With Friendship



"I feel uplifted after going to a tea party on a Sunday afternoon. I've met new people and made new friends. It's just amazing how the volunteers welcome four or five older people into their homes as their friends. It's a marvellous feeling and I definitely recommend it to other people in my situation."

Such words from **Irene, 92**, are the biggest testament to how important the work of Contact the Elderly is. Every month, after the cake is all eaten and the tea has been drunk, volunteers are often told just how much the afternoon has meant to the older people they take home. These sentiments are reinforced by our research, which shows that the positive effects of the tea parties are profoundly felt by all our beneficiaries.

95%

say they now have something to look forward to

55%

of guests said that their wellbeing has improved since joining us

85%

say what they enjoy most about the tea parties is the company

90%

made friends with volunteers, 81% making friends with other guests

77%

say they feel happier and 73% feel less lonely

63%

say they feel part of the community

**On average throughout 2016-17, at least 6 older people contacted us every day wanting to join one of our groups.**

"I've never had anything given to me in my life and I can't believe how kind people have been to me since I've been part of Contact the Elderly. It's absolutely marvellous. It's a wonderful organisation." **John, 85**

"When you get to my age, all you do is look back at the life you had, but Contact the Elderly has given me something to look forward to, something to live for." **Joan, 88**

"My wife has died now and I've been on my own for five years. I was very active until recently when I had a stroke. Being able to join the Contact the Elderly group is wonderful. It makes such a change, being picked up and brought out for tea which was absolutely beautiful." **Walter, 93**





# Conversation, Companionship And A Cuppa



The setting of a tea party is integral to Contact the Elderly. A cup of tea and a slice of cake with a group of friends can provide such a vital sense of community and belonging for thousands of older people.

Contact the Elderly is consistently told by our beneficiaries that what they miss the most is regular company, the chance to get out of the house once a month and a friendly phone call to check up on them from time to time.

Since 1965, Contact the Elderly has inspired communities to come together and invite local older people to their homes once a month. The friendly conversations that take place around tea tables across the country every month represent the community cohesion that Contact the Elderly is striving to achieve. The jovial atmosphere of the gatherings is palpable and very often people can scarcely believe the transformations they see in the physical and mental well-being of the older guests who come to tea.



**81% of Contact the Elderly guests have made friends with other guests with 90% having made friends with their volunteers.**



THE SETTING  
**OF A TEA  
PARTY**  
IS INTEGRAL TO  
CONTACT THE  
**ELDERLY**



# A Caring Community



It is not only the older guests who benefit from our tea parties, our volunteers also notice a real difference in their own wellbeing. Contact the Elderly volunteers regularly see older people who are initially anxious, lonely and isolated become happier, emotive and more talkative when they join together with their local group.

Volunteers are an essential part of Contact the Elderly, without them our service simply would not exist. They offer so much more than comfortable venues, car journeys and plates of food. They are the people who show our beneficiaries that there is a community that cares about them. They listen to their stories and words of wisdom, they remember important dates like birthdays as well as acting as surrogate families to those who have none.

We are consistently impressed by how our volunteers go above and beyond for our beneficiaries. They take time out of their lives to visit poorly guests in hospital, phone them during the week for a chat and check they are not alone over difficult times such as Christmas. These small but meaningful gestures show that the friendships formed around a table are just the beginning of the companionship that Contact the Elderly creates.

98%

of volunteers say the tea parties reduce the isolation of older guests

97%

of volunteers believe it makes the older guests in the group happier

85%

of our volunteers see a higher level of self-esteem in the guests

84%

started volunteering because they wanted to help lonely, older people

“It's fantastic to see the older guests connecting with each other. You can tell that these parties mean so much to them all and it's something they clearly look forward to.” **Hannah - Driver**



# A Caring Community



“I have wanted to volunteer for a long time but I struggled to find something that wasn't too time intensive. Since the Contact the Elderly tea parties only take place once a month, it's perfect for me as it's not too much of a time commitment. The older people love telling us stories from their youth; it's a real honour to be in the company of people who have done so much in their lives. We are all going to get older and it's nice to know that Contact the Elderly is there, looking out for us and our loved ones. I think that's why the charity's work resonates with so many people.” **Tracey - Driver**

“I coordinate a group in Croydon, ensuring older people in the local community have the chance to get out once in a while, make new friends and are treated to a lovely spread of food.” **Grethe - Group Coordinator and Host**

“You do get a warm feeling from doing something that's worthwhile and it's not onerous - if you have a house, a kettle and a teapot, you can easily make people feel welcome. I like to think that after the older guests have been out on a Sunday and get home, the companionship from the afternoon gets them through the time in the weeks ahead when they may not have visitors.” **Ian - Host**

“Thirty years ago I was a volunteer driver with Contact the Elderly and for the last twenty-five years a host. The summer afternoon tea party at our house in Surrey is an amazing event supported by my children, friends and neighbours where we enjoy the experience as much as our elderly guests do. These guys have got some amazing stories and they need to be shared and the only way to do that is to support Contact the Elderly.” **Michael - Host**

# Tea With The GP

People starved of company can often be found making repeat trips to GP surgeries, not because of a particular problem needing treatment but rather the need for someone to talk to and an appointment to fill up some of their day.

Research\* reveals that the health cost of loneliness is equivalent to some £12,000 per person over 15 years, which illustrates how the extra demand on doctors can really add up.

In the light of this issue, Contact the Elderly developed our GP initiative. By partnering with GP surgeries and local volunteers, waiting rooms are transformed into venues for afternoon tea parties.

This mutually beneficial model helps reduce strain on surgeries, stops doctors writing unnecessary prescriptions and reduces the number of people seeking medical help purely for loneliness. The initiative also allows Contact the Elderly to directly identify older people who are most in need of our service, through securing lasting communication with healthcare professionals in communities across the UK.

Between 2016 and 2017, Contact the Elderly launched three new GP groups. Although Manchester has been the target area for launching these groups, development is taking place across the UK, benefitting GP surgeries, older people and the wider community.

“Due to the growing problem of social isolation, older people get depressed and feel very lonely, but this group has had a great impact on their health and wellbeing. For some of my patients it is the only event on their calendar other than hospital appointments.

The tea parties have directly helped in combatting social isolation in a profound way. This has had a great impact on the older people.”

**Dr Murugesh Velayudham, Storrdsdale Medical Centre**

Over the course of the year, Contact the Elderly has seen increasing support for the initiative through medical journals and publications, including GP online, the Journal of Community Nursing and NHS Choices.

\*7 Fulton, Lauren and Jupp, Ben (2015).

Investing to tackle loneliness: a discussion paper,

Social Finance. [www.socialfinance.org.uk/investing-to-tackle-loneliness-a-discussion-paper/](http://www.socialfinance.org.uk/investing-to-tackle-loneliness-a-discussion-paper/)

# More Than Just A Tea Party



## GUESTS



76%

Find Sundays a particularly lonely day



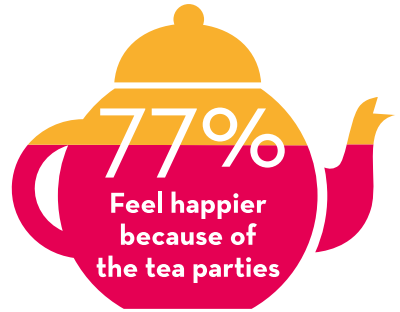
95%

Say they have something to look forward to



85%

Enjoy meals much more when eating in company



77%  
Feel happier because of the tea parties

81%

Have made friends with other guests



90%

Have made friends with their volunteers

85%

Say that the most important part is the company

0800 716543

info@contact-the-elderly.org.uk  
www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk





## VOLUNTEERS



92%

Feel that they are really **giving something back**



84%

Say their motivation is to help lonely, older people



97%

Agree that the tea parties **make the guests happier**



89%  
Feel happier as a result of being involved



77%

Have made friends with the older guests in their group

Say that the tea parties **boost self-esteem of guests**

85%



98%

Feel the tea parties reduce the isolation of guests



# Making Loneliness A Shared Problem



Following the success of 2015-16's 'year of the volunteer', we turned our main focus this year on to finding more of the older guests who would most benefit from our work. Our **Be Our Guest** campaign was created to directly address this balance, as we urged community action from the general public and encouraged everyone to look out for their older neighbours. Drawing upon results from our nationwide survey, we revealed that while one-third of people had noticed a lonely older person in their community and been concerned, 40% did not feel confident that they knew how they could help.



The campaign was launched with national media coverage which saw us on the This Morning sofa, alongside a live report from a special midweek morning tea party! We also had strong coverage from local press throughout the UK.

In addition to this coverage, we launched brand new publicity resources which highlighted the warm welcome of our tea parties as well as their fun and friendly atmosphere. We deliberately chose to aim for these positive messages and move the focus away from the language of loneliness and isolation, which we felt could be too daunting for potential new guests, many of whom might be struggling to admit that they feel lonely.

The **Be Our Guest** campaign played a crucial role raising awareness and applications in a year where we launched nearly 120 new tea party groups.



# Making Loneliness A Shared Problem



## People's Postcode Lottery Cheque Presentation

It was an exciting day at our National Office when two of our celebrity ambassadors dropped in to help us celebrate the wonderful announcement of new support from players of the People's Postcode Lottery. Actresses Linda Marlowe and Tamla Kari visited our staff team to help us say an enormous 'THANK YOU' to all those who made this fantastic support possible.



## Herald Society

We were hugely proud to be awarded the prestigious title of Best Older People's Project of the Year at The Herald Society Awards in Scotland. Over 200 very worthwhile projects were nominated so we were absolutely delighted to be named winners!

While national recognition like this is invaluable in raising awareness of the work that we are doing all across the UK, we undoubtedly see this award as a well deserved endorsement of the hard work and dedication of our wonderful volunteers.







# Filling Up The Teapot

Contact the Elderly's income has increased significantly over the last two years with five main areas of growth.

-  **Securing Big Lottery and Charities Aid Foundation funding**
-  **Increase in Corporate Sponsorship**
-  **Increase in Trust and Foundation income**
-  **Increase in Legacy income**
-  **Individual giving**

Contact the Elderly plans to extend its service **delivery to 10,000 older guests by 2021**. This will be achieved by expansion of our work in existing areas, particularly in isolation hot-spots and where our waiting lists show the need for our groups. **However, to achieve this we need your support.**



## Trusts, Foundations and Grants

Grants from Trusts and Foundations are a vital source of support for us. Their support allows us to continue our work developing new groups in areas that are most in need of our service, as well as sustaining our existing groups.

To allow us to meet the challenges faced by an increasingly ageing population, we hope to foster new relationships with Trusts and Foundations in the coming years and continue to nurture the longstanding relationships we currently enjoy.

## Financial Support








It costs just over £5,000 to develop, launch and support a new Contact the Elderly group in its first year. We recognise the importance of establishing them in a way that means they can run effectively for years. In order to expand and maintain our existing groups, we rely on the amazing generosity of the public, corporate businesses, Trusts, Foundations and grants.

# Filling Up The Teapot



## Individuals

There are many ways you can support us:

-  **Take part in our regular fundraising events**
-  **Host a fundraising event within your community**
-  **Donate your old car**
-  **Leave a gift in your will**
-  **Become a Friend of Contact the Elderly and give a donation on a regular basis**
-  **Introduce Contact the Elderly to your company or club**
-  **Ask your employer to match fund what you raise**



# Filling Up The Teapot

## Corporate Support

We offer a dedicated service and an individual approach to all our corporate partners, ensuring that we build mutually beneficial relationships that enable companies to promote Corporate Social Responsibility to employees, stakeholders and prospective customers.

### Opportunities for support can include:

 **Charity of the Year**

 **Volunteering**

 **Fundraising events**

 **Sponsorship**

 **Payroll giving**

 **Brand Partnership**



“Peters & Peters are honoured to be supporting Contact the Elderly. We felt that we should offer our support to a smaller organisation so that, as well as raising funds, we might assist in raising their profile more generally. Their work seemed to provide a simple, yet uplifting solution to a problem that can have such devastating effects on an older person. We were left in no doubt that this was the cause for us; tea and company, what could be better!”

**Trish, Business Development Director, Peters & Peters**

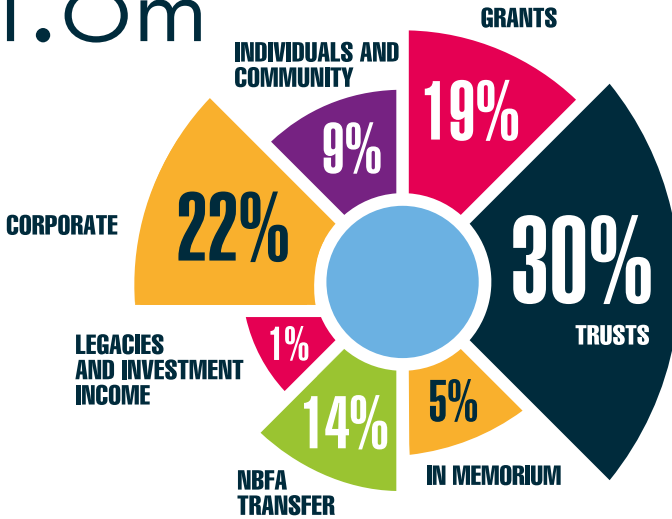
Contact the Elderly would like to thank our corporate supporters including: **Baillie Gifford, BlueBay Asset Management, Bridgepoint, Goldcrest Land Plc, JTI, MBNA, Peters & Peters, PRP, Sackers, Savoo, Shawbrook Bank, Terra Firma, T. Rowe Price, Waitrose and We Are Tea.**

For more information on fundraising or to discuss ways you might support us, please contact a member of our Fundraising Team on **0800 716543** or email **[info@contact-the-elderly.org.uk](mailto:info@contact-the-elderly.org.uk)**



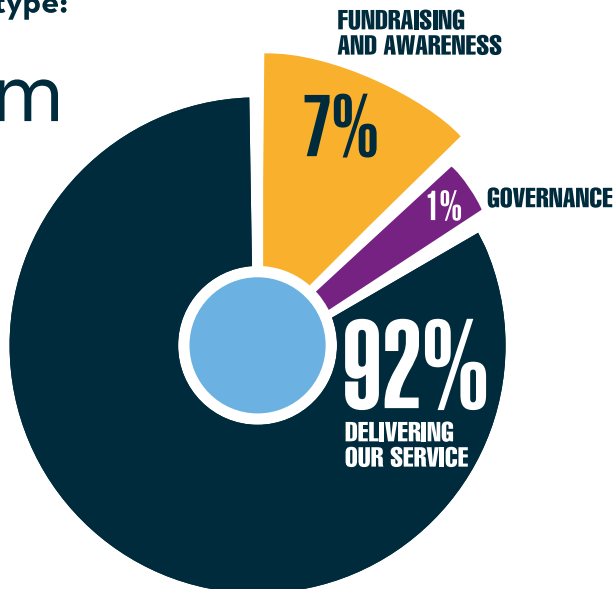
Income by source:

## £1.8m



Expenditure by type:

## £1.4m





# A National Charity With A Local Touch



We pride ourselves on being a national charity with roots in local communities across England, Scotland and Wales. Being active in 740 communities across the whole of the UK, we are launching new groups at a rate of two per week.

“In Scotland, we have seen fantastic growth this year, taking almost 900 older guests out to tea and welcoming three new members to the staff team. We held our first corporate tea party, inviting potential supporters to afternoon tea and showcasing the work that we do in Scotland. This resulted in several organisations agreeing to support us! This year we also began taking part in the BBC Radio Scotland ‘Choose to Chat’ campaign, as well as the Waitrose carrier bag scheme. We continued to be supported by various MSPs and MPs, with three Parliamentary motions lodged commending the work that we are doing. Our work was widely recognised across the country and many of our volunteers were finalists and winners in awards presentations in local authority areas.” **Morna O’May, Head of Service - Scotland**

“2016/17 was a successful year for North & Central England and Wales as we opened 45 new groups, gained publicity from our ‘Be Our Guest’ campaign in the North West and nurtured some fantastic partnerships. Pioneer work continued in the North East, where great volunteer events were held. Our President, Lady Jasmine Cavendish, hosted a wonderful tea party for five South Yorkshire groups at Chatsworth, the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire held a memorable afternoon for five Leeds groups at Bolton Abbey. Tea parties at GP surgeries strongly featured in the Midlands and important work across the region continued, particularly with Rotary and Soroptimist Clubs. We are proud to have a growing relationship with Chester-based MBNA, who launched their first group this year. Funding from the Big Lottery enabled an essential further staff appointment for a specialised Head of Service role in Wales.”

**Mary Robinson, Head of Service - North & Central England and Wales**

“Thanks to new funding, our South of England team grew from 7 to 9 Support and Development Officers during this financial year, enabling us to launch 34 new groups and offer more support to our volunteers and guests. We were honoured to be chosen as Proctor & Gamble’s Charity of the Year, which included a fantastic £10,000 donation. We also welcomed many new volunteers as a result of our partnership with Bisto on the ‘Spare Chair Sunday’ campaign. One volunteer, the owner of the Lifehouse Spa and Hotel in Essex, generously began hosting monthly tea parties at his hotel for a new group. Our support from the firefighters at Sidcup Fire Station continued this year, with the brigade inviting older guests for tea parties, Christmas lunches and seaside outings. They have formed firm friendships with Contact the Elderly guests and volunteers and their support led to us being selected as one of the Mayor of Bexley’s charities of the year”. **Katy Szita,**

**Head of Service - London and South England**





I am extremely proud of all that Contact the Elderly has managed to accomplish throughout 2016/17. From achieving the milestone of 10,000 volunteers to reaching out to over 5,500 older guests, this year has seen steady growth in numbers and significant development of new and existing partnerships. Perhaps most importantly, this progress has been made while maintaining the simplicity of our service delivery and keeping older people at the very heart of what we do. I am excited for what the future holds as we enter the next phase of our growth in a very strong position.

Contact the Elderly is unique: we are a national organisation that is also fully integrated into local communities. We have the benefit of having direct contact with our beneficiaries every month which helps us to have an acute understanding of their needs.

As we look forward, it is tempting to focus on the bleaker picture the future seems to hold. The news agenda about, and discussion around, older people very often focuses on faults in adult social care, cuts to funding, care homes closing and older people spending the last years of their life alone at home with nobody to keep them company. However, Contact the Elderly continues to be recognised as an effective and sustainable solution to ending the epidemic of loneliness and social isolation. We are expanding steadily and fulfilling our aim of identifying the loneliest and most isolated older people across the UK and taking them out to tea. As we have grown over the past few years, we have not lost the local touch which makes us so unique. We have championed older people and inspired thousands of people to take action and give back to their community.

Looking ahead, our key aims are to double our service delivery, including the number of guests we take out to tea, by 2021, and to be recognised as a champion of the cause of loneliness amongst isolated older people. This quote from **Alice, 93** serves as a reminder of how important our work remains.

**“I love Contact the Elderly, it’s really something to look forward to and I’ve made lovely friends. Not everybody is so fortunate. I really couldn’t explain what it’s done for me, I get quite excited getting ready to come and it gives me a reason to get dressed up.”**

Mary Rance, Chief Executive





## CONTACT THE ELDERLY

2 Grosvenor Gardens  
London  
SW1W 0DH

**0800 716543**

[info@contact-the-elderly.org.uk](mailto:info@contact-the-elderly.org.uk)  
[www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk](http://www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk)



Registered charity number:  
1146149 in England and Wales  
SC039377 in Scotland

