**SeniorLine**

 **When Listening is Helping**

**SeniorLine – same helpful service, new name, new Freephone number 1800 80 45 91**

**Senior Help Line, Ireland’s only national helpline for older people provided by trained older volunteers has changed its name to SeniorLine and has a new Freephone number**

SeniorLine, a new Freephone peer listening service for older people is launched in Dublin on Tuesday, June 27 by Minister of State, Tom Daly TD. The keynote address is given by Professor Eamon O’Shea, Department of Gerontology, NUIG. The launch is a culmination of a three-year development programme to create a first class service for older people. Since 2014, 170 new volunteers have been recruited, mentored, and trained in Dublin to provide an empathic model of listening that provides emotional and practical help to callers.

SeniorLine is open every day of the year from 10 am to 10 pm. SeniorLIne is Ireland’s only peer telephone service for older people, and is particularly supportive to those who suffer from loneliness and isolation.

SeniorLine today publishes the results of a national independent survey revealing that many older people with a problem would phone a help line if they thought they would be ‘listened to properly’ , and if the exchange were confidential. Aine Brady, CEO of Third Age, the voluntary agency that manages SeniorLine, explains what makes the service unique: “SeniorLine really listens. Our volunteers are trained to listen to every caller, and support them in any worries or difficulties. SeniorLine is confidential. We are aware of the dignity and respect owing to each caller who trusts us with the personal details of their lives. Our sole aim is to encourage each caller with any problem in the direction they feel they could take”, she says.

Established almost 20 years ago, SeniorLine now receives over 800 calls each month from older people nationally. People phone with specific problems, and for company and conversation. Callers may phone to say ‘good night’, and often the SeniorLine volunteer may be the only human voice they hear all day – or all week.

SeniorLine’s new Freefone number will make the line accessible to greater numbers of older people, especially those on a budget. The LoCall number 1850 440 444 remains available; subsidised through fundraising, no landline call costs a caller more than 30 cent irrespective of location.

SeniorLine is recognised as a primary health care service, helping to keep older people living independent lives at home for longer. This is the wish of many, and part of government policy. SeniorLine uses the anonymised information from every call to advocate on behalf of each caller and for older people generally. SeniorLine regularly publicises the need for home services for older people, good rural public transport, retention of local services such as banks, post offices and hospitals.

SeniorLine welcomes the Behaviour & Attitudes survey, which found that half the population claim that if they were an older person with a problem, they would phone a line dedicated to listening and supporting older people. “We look forward to welcoming new callers to SeniorLine. We are open when many statutory services are closed. We would encourage family members with an older parent or relative living alone to give them our Freephone number, and to let them know we would be delighted to hear from them,” says Aine Brady.

**For further information, contact Anne Dempsey, Communications Manager 087-7450721**