

Counsel and Care supports campaign to keep local services close by

Counsel and Care is supporting [Living Streets' Neighbourhood Heroes](#) campaign, which highlights the fact that many people, including some of the most vulnerable, struggle to access essential local shops and services on foot.

New research by YouGov reveals the impact that this can have. More than a quarter (28%) of all British residents feel isolated, or have a friend or loved one who does, because of difficulty accessing basic amenities such as libraries, schools, shops selling fresh food, post offices, banks, GPs and community pubs on foot.

Older people are among the worst affected. According to the YouGov survey, nearly half (47%) of those aged 55+ in Britain cannot walk to their nearest GP's surgery, cutting many less mobile people off from healthcare. Meanwhile, 58 per cent of over 55s are unable to walk to their nearest bank.

As well as the risk of isolation and inequality, being unable to walk for such everyday journeys cuts older people off from exercise and, by discouraging people from using the streets, makes antisocial behaviour and neighbourhood decline more likely.

With services such as drop-in centres and libraries under threat from cuts, and the Government making major changes to the planning system, Living Streets is calling on the Government to make sure that easy walking access to local shops and services for all is prioritised in national planning policy.

Part of this is ensuring that communities have a greater say through the planning system when essential local services are threatened by changes of use. Over 40 per cent of bank branches have closed or changed their use since 1990 according to the Campaign for Community Banking – many of which will not have required planning permission. 81 per cent of British adults think communities should have a say when the use of a building is changed.

Peter Watt, Chief Executive of Counsel and Care, said:

“Living in a neighbourhood that is easy to get around independently is a crucial part of helping older people stay in control of their lives. As the population ages, designing our streets and neighbourhoods for all will have to become much more of a priority. We are pleased to support Living Streets in this campaign.”

You can support the campaign by visiting www.livingstreets.org.uk/heroes.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,019 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between the 15th - 17th February 2011. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).