

The logo for CIPR PRIDE AWARDS 2019 GOLD WINNER. The text 'CIPR PRIDE AWARDS 2019' is in white, and 'GOLD WINNER' is in large, multi-colored letters (pink, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple).

Category: Construction, Property or Infrastructure Campaign

Company: McCann PR & Social

Entry title: Tackling loneliness for McCarthy & Stone

Brief and objectives:

The UK's leading retirement housebuilder, McCarthy & Stone, has an ambition to ensure everyone has access to housing appropriate to their needs. Our brief was to strengthen their position in the market, demonstrate their understanding of the lives of older people, and 'own' part of the conversation on loneliness - showing how McCarthy & Stone is helping to provide a positive solution to the problem.

The idea, research and planning:

3.6 million older people live alone and over six million older people face loneliness in the UK; this is a problem that must be addressed. McCarthy & Stone believes it's time we all stopped thinking this is someone else's problem, so we created a conversation with a purpose.

We researched 1,000 over 65's to find out if they are lonely. While the subject is one that has been covered extensively, our research also explored how older people feel about being lonely and what they are doing to combat these feelings. From this, we were able to establish a strong case for us all to be more community minded and to show that small but meaningful actions could prove to be part of the solution to the loneliness epidemic.

These findings were crafted into a campaign with a call to action, encouraging everyone to do one thing that would make an older person feel less isolated. This wasn't about onerous time consuming commitments – we needed to make the point small actions can make a big difference. And the societal impact and benefit could be immense.

Strategy, tactics, creativity and innovation:

The premise is a simple one. We asked people to pledge to undertake one small act of kindness which can help to start turn this problem around. These actions didn't need to change the world. It only takes one moment to make a positive difference.

With the support of campaign ambassador, Paula Radcliffe MBE (who has a personal story connected to loneliness), we launched #TakesOne2018 to encourage everyone to pledge to do one thing to help put an end to loneliness.

We used our research results to drive media coverage of the issue. To coincide with the media activity, a virtual pledge wall went live and celebrity ambassador Paula Radcliffe shared her personal pledge. Members of the public, homeowners and celebrities then all joined the campaign using #takesone2018.

350 stakeholders were contacted to engage them with the appeal and we took the campaign to McCarthy & Stone developments across the country with Friendship Friday events. We also introduced a pen pals scheme – reviving the lost art of letter writing - helping less mobile over 65s to make new friendships.

Delivery:

The campaign was activated across earned, owned and shared channels.

A content hub on the McCarthy & Stone website contained the research findings, testimonials, links to the RVS, Samaritans and Age UK, and the 'Wall of Pledges' so people could share and inspire others with their actions.

The research generated national headlines and widespread broadcast coverage including Sky News Sunrise and numerous BBC radio stations, creating debate and raising awareness of the issue.

McCarthy & Stone homeowner, Sylvie Morgan, was recruited to be the voice of a generation and talk about her experience of being widowed. Sylvie could talk first-hand about how enriched her life has become since joining the McCarthy & Stone community. She was joined by Paula Radcliffe on a broadcast tour promoting the campaign and encouraging people to act using #takesone2018 to drive social profile and commentary.

In order to engage more people with our 'call to action', we worked with five well-known influencers (spanning different age demographics), to do one thing to make a difference to the life of an older person in their community, and share their experiences via their blogs and Instagram to educate and inspire others.

We took our message to homeowners and their families through in-development posters and features in McCarthy & Stone's dedicated magazine, Emerald, and asked McCarthy & Stone employees to add to the Wall of Pledges.

We targeted stakeholders, from local mayors, schools and charities who McCarthy & Stone has engaged with across the regions, to national MPs and Tracey Crouch, Minister for Loneliness.

A regional PR toolkit activated the campaign further with regional press coverage and events, and following the launch, we opened the doors to McCarthy & Stone developments up and down the country for 'Friendship Fridays' – a coffee morning to provide a vital friendship link for older people. Over 41 events were held attended by over 800 guests.

Finally, some members of the community can't easily get out-and-about to attend events, so through a nationwide McCarthy & Stone pen-pal initiative we connected people and helped them form friendships by reviving the lost art of letter writing.

Measurement and evaluation:

The results of the campaign included:

- The launch alone reached more than six million people
- 100+ pledges – including the RVS and NHBC, helping to raise the profile of the campaign to a wider audience
- 13,793 website visits
- 800+ attendees at 'Friendship Friday' events
- 800+ hours of support for older members of the community through events alone
- 100+ applications for the pen pals initiative
- 200 letters exchanged to date and new friendships made
- 40,000 people reached through an email to the McCarthy & Stone database
- Live interview Paula Radcliffe and a McCarthy & Stone homeowner for the launch on Sky News Sunrise
- 58 minutes of airtime across BBC radio and Sky News Sunrise
- National coverage in the Sunday Express, Independent, The Sun and widespread regional coverage, amounting to over 120 individual pieces
- Combined follower reach of 1.2 million and over 51,000 likes from five influencers
- Meetings secured with The Jo Cox Foundation, Age UK and Paul Maynard MP.

Budget and campaign impact:

Fee of £27,000, third party costs of £36,000.

Just under 1,000 older people directly engaged through Friendship Fridays and Pen Pals. As a result of this campaign, a successful meeting took place with The Jo Cox Foundation which has led to a planned collaboration for later this year to continue the loneliness message and inspire more ways of taking action to end loneliness.