



advice and support for older age
**Independent
Age**

Year in review **2014**



Contents

- 1 **Welcome** by Chief Executive, Janet Morrison
- 2 **January** Offering unrivalled expertise in social care advice
- 4 **February** Taking action to end loneliness
- 6 **March** Making the UK a better place to grow older in
- 8 **April** Providing jargon-free advice and information
- 10 **May** Building a network of caring volunteers
- 12 **June** Reaching out to the UK's unpaid carers
- 14 **July** Protecting the poorest pensioners
- 16 **August** Giving an older person a lift, just by picking up the phone
- 18 **September** Generating debate on the issues that matter
- 20 **October** Highlighting social isolation in older men
- 22 **November** Challenging ageism in the media
- 24 **December** Tackling the growing fuel poverty gap
- 26 **Future plans**
- 28 **Help us to continue our work**



Welcome to the 2014 review from older people's charity, Independent Age, featuring our main activities over the year.

As you will see, we have enjoyed many achievements. In particular, we were thrilled that our Secret Subsidy campaign, tackling the issue of care home top-up fees, resulted in a strengthening of the guidelines (see page 14). And we were also pleased that our key reports - on the rise of social isolation among older men (see page 20) and on understanding the care needs of older people (see page 23) - both gained widespread coverage, raising awareness of these worrying issues.

Meanwhile, more people contacted our free advice service than ever before, and we increased our volunteer visitor activity so that, between them, our older people received over 27,000 one-to-one visits over the year.

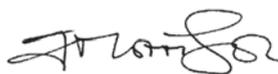
Of course, there is still so much more to be done. Too many older people lack support because they simply do not

know who to turn to for help. And extreme loneliness is at such appalling proportions that 1 in 10 older people regularly go for a whole month without speaking to family or friends.

With this in mind, we have spent time revisiting our expansion plans to check we really are providing the most effective - and cost effective - services possible. Having listened to feedback from sector professionals, our volunteers and the older people we support, we have put together a refreshed strategy to 2020 which will enable us to help many more older people to lead the lives they want to lead (see page 26).

This is an exciting time, and we could not make such bold strides without your generous support. Thank you from all of us - I look forward to updating you on progress again next year.

Best wishes



Janet Morrison
Chief Executive



January

Offering unrivalled expertise in social care advice

The last thing anyone needs on top of distressing health problems is to have to navigate a complex care system alone. That's why we kicked off the year with a goal to expand the reach of our free nationwide advice service, which offers unrivalled expertise in social care advice for older people, particularly to those who have reached crisis point and have no one else to turn to.

Although many callers to our advice service are older people themselves, some are family members and friends. Richard*, for example, called us after a stroke had left his 81-year-old mother completely debilitated and in urgent need of residential nursing care. He was struggling to find the right care home and work out how to pay for it, all before she came out of the hospital rehabilitation ward.

Pat, one of our advisers, talked Richard through the process, explaining what his mother should be entitled to and what action he should take. One issue was that he had been told by his mother's social worker that there were no care home rooms available at the council's standard rate so he would have to pay a contribution, otherwise known as a 'top-up fee' (see page 14). This had left him feeling vulnerable about his lack of knowledge of the system and unsure how to proceed.

Pat was able to offer clarity and reassurance, and Richard found her advice so valuable he sent her a message afterwards, saying, "I really can't thank you enough for your time - you really gave me hope..."

We are pleased to report that we received more calls and emails to our advice service in 2014 than ever before and look forward to increasing

our reach even further. This is being made possible thanks to the generosity of supporters like yourself.

*Name has been changed to protect the privacy of our confidential advice service users. Picture posed by model.



**For free advice on social care,
call us on 0800 319 6789 or email
advice@independentage.org**

February

Taking action to end loneliness

Extreme loneliness is twice as bad for our health as obesity, increasing our chances of premature death. This shocking research, released in February by the University of Chicago, prompted the national coalition, Campaign to End Loneliness, of which we are a founding member, to release a statement which said, "...loneliness is not just a sad state of affairs, it is a genuine public health issue".

Loneliness and isolation is one of biggest issues facing older people today and tackling this modern-day hazard underpins all our work. Our experience shows that, although family and friends moving away often has an impact, all kinds of other issues can lead to loneliness, from financial poverty to poor health. Looking at the bigger picture can help us identify those in need before their circumstances become intolerable.

Margaret, from Suffolk, who's now 93, first got in contact with us 20 years ago and we've been supporting her ever since. As her deteriorating health has forced her to spend more and more time at home over recent years, we put Margaret in touch with volunteer visitor Georgina, who lives locally, and the two have become great friends.

"I don't know what I'd do without Georgina, I really don't," Margaret says. "My friends are old like me and not on the doorstep so it's so reassuring to know I can call on her. I now find it too tiring to go out so I really enjoy her visits, and we phone and email each other too. I am very fortunate to have her - she really is wonderful."

Georgina, a retired antiques dealer, says, "I get so much out of seeing Margaret, I can't begin to tell you. Physically

Befriending

she is quite frail but mentally is absolutely on fire. We have similar interests and we laugh hugely together. Our friendship really enriches my life."

If you think you or someone you know might like a volunteer visitor or to volunteer for us, visit our website or call us on 0800 319 6789.



Georgina and Margaret

March

Making the UK a better place to grow older in

The UK population is ageing. By 2030 the number of people aged 60 or over is expected to be almost 20 million - nearly 1 in 3 of the total population. So how will we cope as a society with this unprecedented increase? And what can we do now to be better prepared?

These were the questions posed by our 2030 Vision report, launched in partnership with the International Longevity Centre (ILC-UK) in March at the House of Lords. The report explores the major issues facing older people today, such as loneliness, poverty and paying for care, and examines current trends to paint a picture of the best and worst scenarios of life for older people in the UK in 2030.

The launch kicked off a consultation with older people, Independent Age supporters and the wider public who shared with

us their hopes and fears for the future. Worryingly, many expressed their anxieties about the kind of care and support they're likely to receive, and about feeling undervalued and experiencing a sharp decline in quality of life. John, 64, from Hertfordshire, said, for example, "By 2030 I think older people will be seen as a strain on the country; as a waste of time and money."

We also invited professionals working in various sectors to blog for us about what they think needs to change. Covering a whole range of topics, from financial products to public toilets, some wrote about campaigns they were involved in, while others wrote about inspiring changes and new developments in technology already taking place that will benefit us all.

We would like to thank everyone who took the time

Campaigning

to give us their views. We are now using the consultation to inform our work and will be publishing a report in March

with key findings which will help launch our 2015-2020 strategy.



To find out more about our 2030 Vision campaign, visit www.independentage.org/campaigning

April

Providing jargon-free advice and information

Helping your elderly relative to move into a care home can be incredibly stressful and we receive calls every day from older people and their families trying to find out about the different options available and how to pay for them. In response to this, we launched the fourth addition to our popular Wise Guide series in April, *Choosing a Care Home*.

This practical handbook sheds light on the care home system and the different kind of housing available. With insider tips from social workers, nurses, care home managers and residents, it aims to advise older people and their families on what to look for in a care home and help them to be better prepared for the issues that may come up along the way.

We launched our first Wise Guide, *Advice for Later Life*, in 2011, after becoming frustrated at the lack of reader-friendly information

out there for older people. This Wise Guide looks at ways to boost your income, while the second one, *Extra Help at Home*, is about home care options. The third Wise Guide, *Healthy, Happy, Connected*, is about overall wellbeing and social groups.

We've received extremely positive feedback on our Wise Guide series, with almost all the older people we surveyed saying they found them easy to understand. Additionally, two-thirds told us that reading the Wise Guides made them feel less worried and actively helped them to feel more independent.

One reader, from Plymouth, wrote to us to say, "The guide has been really helpful in allowing us to get to grips with the complexity of arranging and financing care for an elderly relative... I feel much more confident about facing the council and the care home."

We are currently putting the finishing touches to Wise Guide 5 on how to get the most from the NHS, which will be launched later in the year.



May

Building a network of caring volunteers

Our committed volunteers are central to our work. Not only do they make a huge difference to the older people they support, but their presence on the ground also helps to give us a better understanding of the challenges of old age across the UK.

Many of our volunteers are retired themselves. Brian, from Teesside, for example, joined us in 2013, after finishing a 40-year career in the finance sector. Having recently moved back to his birthplace with his wife, he felt the time was right to become more involved in his local community.

Brian was asked to take on the role of Organising Volunteer for Teesside in May, supporting our regional staff with volunteer recruitment and assessing the needs of the older people we support. One year on, he told us, "The

role appealed to me because I thought my organising skills and experience could offer a valuable contribution."

He wasn't wrong. With Brian's help, the number of volunteers in Teesside has grown, as has the number of older people receiving support from us there.

Brian says, "Society seems to write off elderly people a bit too easily, forgetting they've all had lives and done things. I find the discussions really interesting. I've got one lady, when I turn up to see her she's stood on the doorstep waiting for me which is lovely.

"I also like getting involved in problem-solving. I had a lady last week who was getting aggravation from her care providers. They'd made a mess of her bill but wouldn't accept it. She was really stressed about it so I was able

Befriending

to offer a listening ear and make sure she had the right help to resolve the problem. Little things like that make

a big, big difference for an elderly person who's having sleepless nights over it. I'm just glad to be able to help."

Brian



To volunteer for us, visit www.independentage.org or call 0800 319 6789.

June

Reaching out to the UK's unpaid carers

There are 6.5 million carers in the UK - ordinary people who are looking after a frail, ill or disabled family member or friend, sometimes round the clock. But according to a report released in June to mark Carers Week 2014, over half aren't getting enough support.

Caring can be extremely demanding. Over half of carers are forced to give up work in order to fulfil their caring responsibilities, while many experience depression. Yet only 1 in 3 carers felt they were receiving enough support and almost 70% said they would be more able to do the job if they'd known exactly what help they could get right from the start.

One carer featured in the report said, "My brother cares full time for both my parents. My father's 91 and unable to walk without assistance. My mother's 86, has severe

dementia and needs help 24/7. I help at weekends and one evening a week. My brother's spoken to the doctor about care for my mother and was told the dementia nurse has a full case load. He's contacted a charity who have agreed to help for two hours per week."

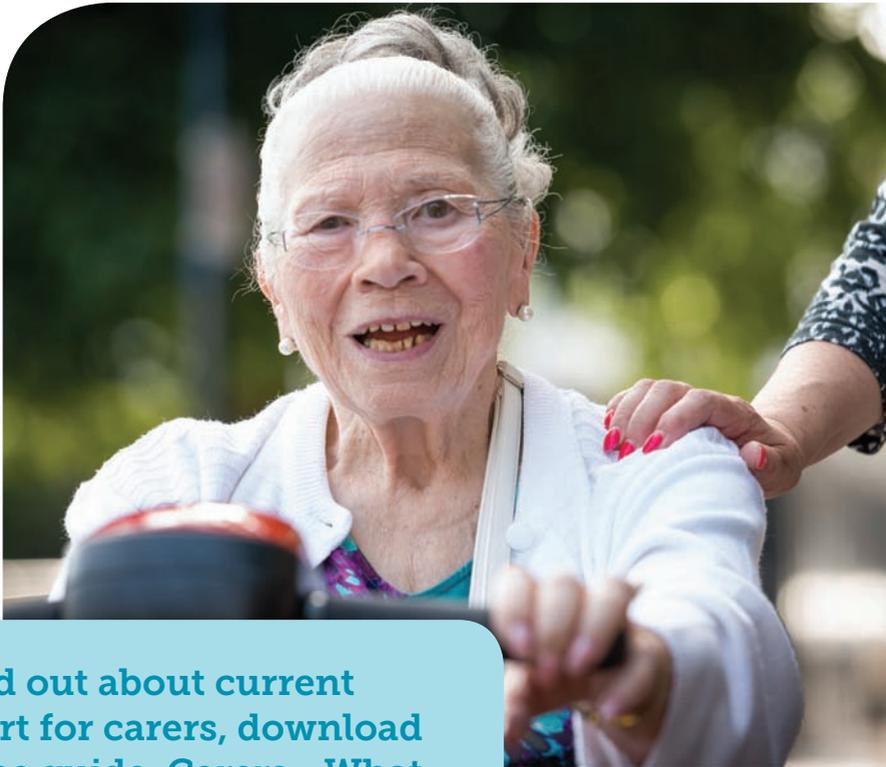
The report also revealed worrying public ignorance of the rising call on families to provide unpaid care. With an ageing population and people living longer with disability and illness, the number of unpaid carers is rising fast and in just over 20 years is set to reach 9 million. Yet most people asked thought they'd never be a carer - or even need one.

In 2014, Carers Week, an awareness campaign supported by Independent Age and other national charities, launched Carers Week Quest, an initiative

Campaigning

to encourage better support for carers through improved collaboration in local communities. We also arranged for some carers

we support to talk with MPs about the challenges they face and how important the advice they've received from Independent Age has been.



To find out about current support for carers, download our free guide, Carers - What Support is Available (Guide 10) or contact us on 0800 319 6789 or advice@independentage.org to order a copy.

July

Protecting the poorest pensioners

We are delighted that, after months of lobbying, the main demands of our Secret Subsidy campaign, tackling the worrying issue of care home top-ups, have been met in the new Care Act guidance. The fees are causing thousands of families untold stress and leaving them unfairly out of pocket.

Although top-ups are reasonable for fully council funded residents when the family decides against the care home placement offered in favour of something more expensive, they are not meant to be paid to cover the costs of basic care. But some care homes are charging top-ups for basic care in order to subsidise councils' insufficient contributions.

We receive a call every working day from worried relatives trying to find out whether they really have to pay, anxious their relative will lose their place if they

refuse. Yet many callers can't afford to pay. In fact, many are pensioners themselves.

In June, 36 MPs expressed their support for our campaign in an Early Day Motion. Then, in July, our research was used in a parliamentary debate, led by Paul Burstow MP, where Health and Social Care Minister, Norman Lamb, responded positively to our concerns.

Speaking in parliament, Norman Lamb said that "the idea of a care home constantly ratcheting the top-up fee to someone who is perhaps in the latter stages of their life, perhaps got dementia, is completely unacceptable exploitation of that individual and should be condemned".

Paul Burstow said, "Vulnerable elderly people must never be strong-armed or misled into paying over the odds for their care... It is critical that the costs local authorities determine will meet a person's care needs are adequate to do just that."

The new guidance, released in October by the government, has strengthened the rules and put a legal requirement on councils to change their approach. Our challenge

now is to make sure that it is implemented by every council across the country and continue to make sure care home residents and their families are aware of their rights.



**For advice on third party top-ups,
call us on 0800 319 6789 or email
advice@independentage.org**

August

Giving an older person a lift, just by picking up the phone

Relationship counsellor Relate released results from a study in August revealing that 1 in 10 people in the UK don't have a close friend to call on. Helping older people feel better about life is integral to our work and our volunteer Telephone Buddies offer a lifeline to those going through a difficult patch or just need a good friend to talk to.

Last year, 74-year-old Janet, who is widowed and lives in Somerset, was referred to our Telephone Buddies service by her social worker. She had suffered an attack similar to a stroke which had left her feeling very emotional. She says, "Other than not being able to get the right words out sometimes, the main affect is that I can cry when I'm a bit under pressure. I'm told it's affected the emotional side of my brain."

Janet used to run a hotel with her husband but sold up after he died and has spent the last few years indulging in her love of dogs by volunteering for an animal rescue centre. We matched her with fellow dog lover, Tessa, who phones once a week, and one year on Janet says she'd recommend Telephone Buddies to everyone.

"Tessa's an absolute Godsend," she says. "We have such lovely chats about dogs and everything. They match you according to your interests so it could be carpentry or whatever you like. And talking about what interests you, that's got to be good for the brain, hasn't it?"

Janet says the regular contact helps her to feel more positive: "Tessa often dog sits so when she phones she'll say,

Befriending

'I'm here with four springer spaniels,' or 'I've got two Alsatians today,' or whatever. It's just lovely! I don't know if it's because I live on my own

but sometimes I think, 'Oh, it's Tuesday today and Tessa's going to ring,' and I really get excited about it. It gives me a real lift."

If you think you or someone you know might like to receive one of our befriending services, call 0800 319 6789.



Janet

September

Generating debate on the issues that matter

In 2013, a House of Lords report concluded that Britain is “woefully underprepared” for its ageing population. This spurred us to launch our 2030 Vision consultation exactly one year later (see March) and, in September, join a series of debates in partnership with The Guardian newspaper, British Red Cross and Hanover Housing, about how society should get ready for demographic change.

The series kicked off in London where Independent Age Chief Executive, Janet Morrison, facilitated a discussion between key professionals from across central and local government, civil society and the private sector. This was followed by fringe debates at the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat Political Party Conferences.

Highlights included Care and Support Minister, Norman

Lamb MP, praising the volunteering potential of older people. He said: “That great army of people out there, if you can somehow tap the energy and commitment that they are prepared to give, you may start to find some of the solutions to the challenges we face.”

Meanwhile, Janet, who was on a panel with Local Government Minister, Kris Hopkins MP, called for an honest debate about the financial challenge facing public services. She said, “There is a real black hole in the finances of the health service but also, and just as importantly, there is a black hole in the finances for social care,” adding, “so I think we need to be more honest with people, to say we are going to have to pay more for a joined-up health and social care system.”

Janet also spoke up for those older people without close family - “the people who

Campaigning

haven't got someone to shout loudly for them; to advocate their needs" - arguing that they are being ignored by the State.



To find out more about our parliamentary work, visit www.independentage.org/campaigning

Pictured above: Janet on a panel with, from left, The Guardian's David Brindle, former LGA Chairman Sir Merrick Cockell, Kris Hopkins MP and Mike Adamson from British Red Cross.

Photo: Bob Fallon courtesy of The Guardian

October

Highlighting social isolation in older men

Over a million older men are socially isolated, with 1 in 5 having less than monthly contact with their friends. These are the findings of research we undertook in partnership with the International Longevity Centre (ILC-UK), launched in a report, *Isolation: The Emerging Crisis for Older Men*, in October.

Using newly-released data from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, the research examined the experiences of older men and found that living alone has a far more significant bearing on men than women when it comes to social isolation. Older men tend to see family and friends less often and are also less likely to attend mainstream services.

One of the older men we interviewed as part of our research, 88-year-old David*, lost his wife a year ago then had an accident and broke both hips, leaving him

completely immobile. He has a daughter who visits every two weeks, and carers who come daily, but he hasn't been out of the house for 16 months and doesn't have any friends who pop round. He says, "You can get by during the week, but weekends are deadly."

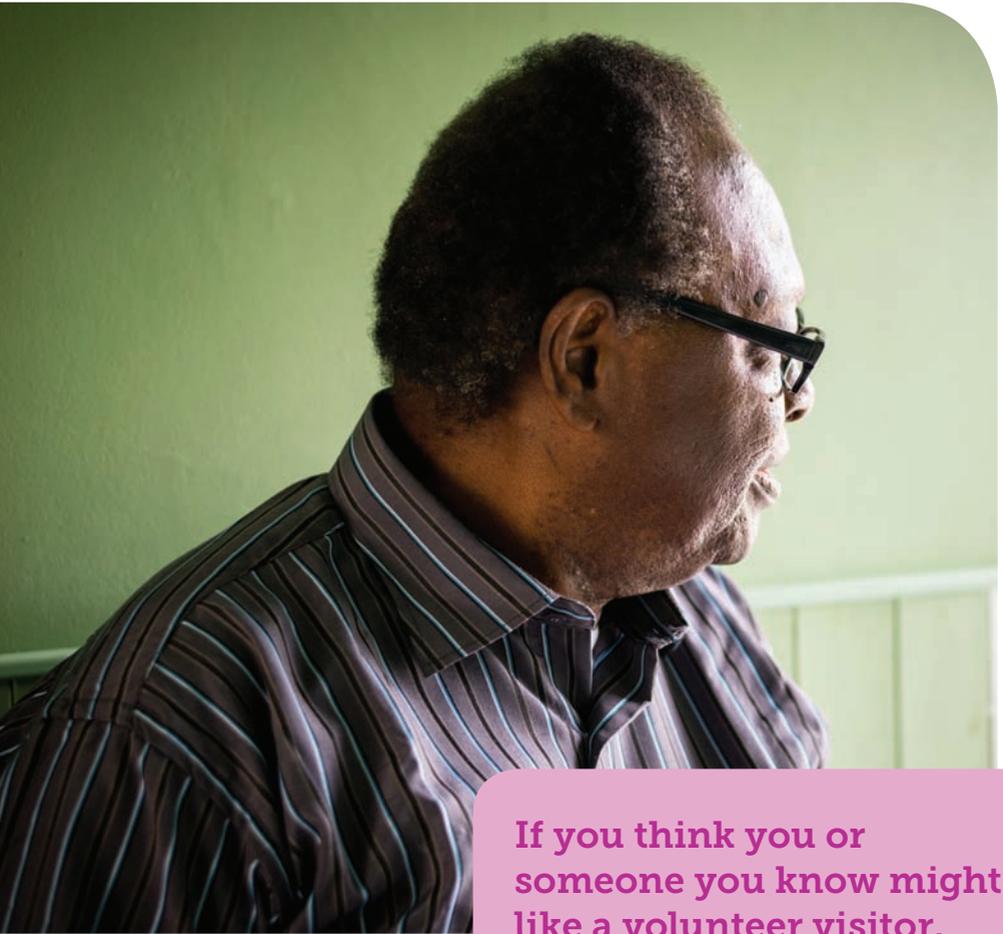
Fortunately David got in contact with Independent Age. We were able to find three local volunteers who, between them, visit around twice a week. David says, "They are so lovely, your people. I can't tell you how wonderful they've been... It's lovely seeing people face to face - they tell me what's going on in the town."

With the number of older men living alone expected to rise by 2030, the problem of social isolation is set to get worse. The report looks at how to identify those most at risk and what works in current provision. We are now using these insights in our

Befriending

own work and to influence councils so they can take local action to identify those most at risk of loneliness.

*Name has been changed to protect the identity of our research interviewees. Picture posed by model.



If you think you or someone you know might like a volunteer visitor, call us on 0800 319 6789.

November

Challenging ageism in the media

Our annual Older People in the Media Awards ceremony was held in London's British Library in November. The evening, sponsored by Barchester Healthcare, was hosted by journalist and presenter, John Sergeant, and attended by high profile names including TV personality and The Silver Line founder, Esther Rantzen, and Care Quality Commission Chief, Andrea Sutcliffe.

The awards recognise excellence in the coverage of older people's issues and include categories across all media, from Best Factual TV Programme on Older People's Issues to Best Use of Photography to Illustrate Older People's Issues. We received hundreds of nominations this year from supporters and members of the general public, giving our judging panel an enormously difficult task.

Writer and critic AA Gill picked up an award for

an article he wrote for the Sunday Times on turning 60, while Dame Judi Dench was voted Best Older Person's Character by the users of social media site, Gransnet, for her role in the film *Philomena*.

On hearing she had won, Dame Judi sent a message saying, "It can't possibly be for me - I've only been in the business for 60 years. Thank you very much indeed for this award."

Meanwhile, AA Gill sent a pertinent and humorous message from Australia, which read: "I am of course grateful to be given this award. I am very aware that there is little grown-up writing for or about the aged. It is all telling us to stay as young as possible, that 60 is the new 40. It isn't. And anyway I hated being 40. Age is what it is, and it is childish and patronising to pretend we can wish it away."

Campaigning

Other winners included columnist and writer, Anne Karpf, for her book, *How to Age*, and other work in which she urges society to change its attitude to ageing; Channel 4's groundbreaking documentary, *Fabulous Fashionistas*, about six stylish older women who are redefining old age; and BBC1's hard hitting *Panorama* on care home abuse.

Also, in November, we launched major new research with the think-tank, The Strategic Society Centre, into disability and care in England's older population. The main findings revealed that over 2 million pensioners struggle with the most basic day-to-day tasks and 70,000 of the most disabled pensioners do not receive paid or unpaid care at home.



To find out more about our campaigning activities, visit www.independentage.org/campaigning

John Sergeant and Esther Rantzen

December

Tackling the growing fuel poverty gap

A staggering 81% of people on a low income worry about paying heating bills in winter and almost half of those with disabilities have been forced to cut back on food in order to be able to pay. That's according to a survey by charity Turn2us, who launched a campaign in 2014, supported by Independent Age, to tackle the growing fuel poverty gap.

We receive many calls to our free advice service from older people who are struggling to cope with energy bills and other necessities, particularly at this time of year, and we often find they are not claiming all their entitlements. Recent figures from Age UK reveal that even though a quarter of over-65s are struggling financially, up to £5.5 billion in benefits go unclaimed every year.

Our advisers and case workers are experts in benefits

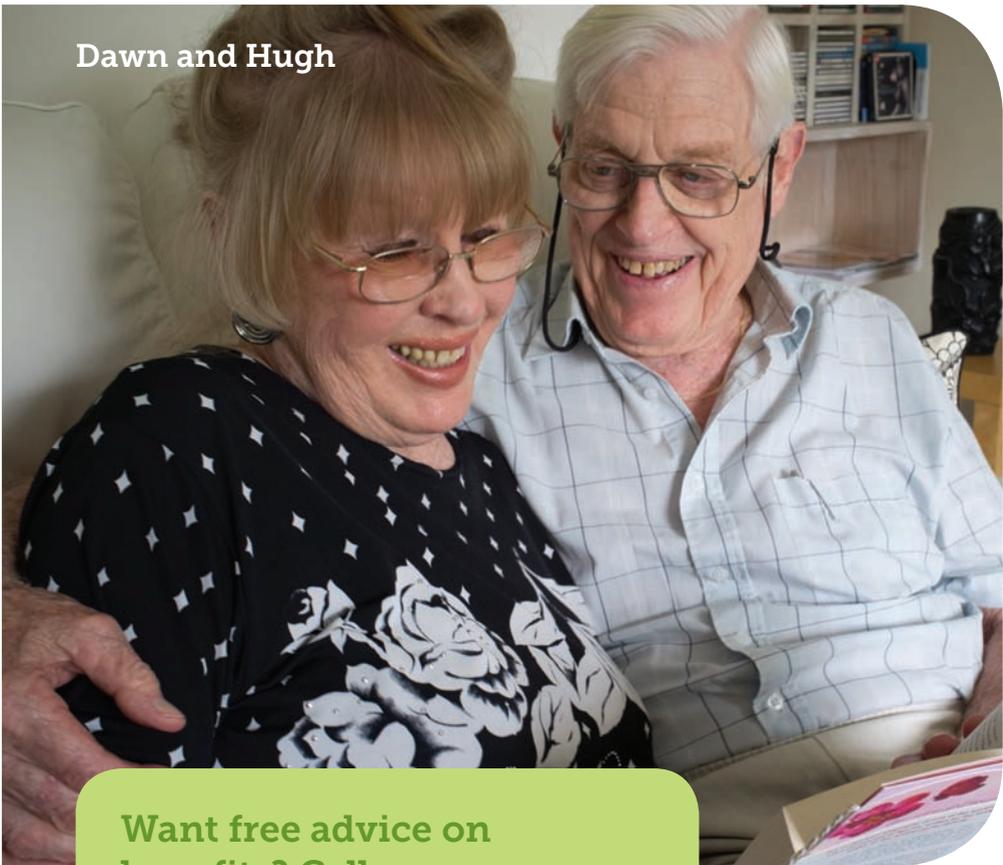
eligibility so are able to give personalised on-the-spot advice. We helped Hugh, 84, who is cared for by his 80-year-old wife Dawn, for example, to claim extra money as they were entitled to carer benefits they didn't know about. The couple, who live in Gloucestershire, had been desperately struggling to survive on their meagre income, so the extra £130 each month it gives them has been a real blessing. "Quite frankly, we're living very close to the breadline," Hugh says.

The money helps in all kinds of little ways and eases the stress of paying the bills in winter time. "This extra income has enabled us to stretch our budget that little bit further," Hugh says. "The money has worked itself in through different ways; we now look at the monthly finances and it's reassuring to know there's a little extra.

For instance, with electricity, we feel more comfortable knowing we could put the heating on a little earlier than

normal and leave it on slightly later. It's that sort of thing that gives us peace of mind."

Dawn and Hugh



Want free advice on benefits? Call us on 0800 319 6789 or email advice@independentage.org

Future plans

As well as reviewing our success in 2014, we've also been planning for our future.

Building on the basics of our Advice, Befriending, Campaigning strategy, our goal is to help far more people than we do at the moment. By 2020, we plan to:

- extend our public information services - like our Wise Guides - and our website, increasing the number of information resources distributed to over 1 million annually
- at the same time, increase usage of our telephone and email advice service, with over 100,000 enquiries answered each year
- extend our befriending services - including trying out new types of services - doubling the number of visits and calls to lonely older people by 2020
- continue to expand our successful campaigning activity, building a network of supporter individuals and organisations.



We plan to focus our attentions on older people in greatest need - quite often the oldest - and their families and carers, who struggle to manage complex conditions, find it hard to get good support and can be at most risk of isolation and loneliness.

We won't do this alone. We want Independent Age to increasingly work with other, like-minded organisations to ensure older people, their families and carers get the best possible help.

With your continued support, we are confident that we will achieve our goal to make the UK a better country to grow older in.



Our mission:

To enable older people to stay independent and live well with dignity, choice and control.

Help us continue our work

Thank you!

This year, we aim to reach out to even greater numbers of older people and continue addressing the three poverties that affect them: financial poverty, poverty of social contact and poverty of information.

Help us spread the word - we welcome the support of individuals, trusts and companies.

You could:

- pass on this booklet to someone you know who may be sympathetic to our cause
- make us your Charity of the Year - nominate Independent Age at work or at your local supermarket
- become a partner organisation and help support the most vulnerable older people
- take part in one of our sponsored challenges or host a Big Tea at work
- order free copies of our popular Wise Guides for someone you know
- join our campaigns and lobby your MP
- subscribe to our e-newsletters, find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.



To learn more about our projects, funders are welcome to call our Trust team on **020 7605 4284** or email **barbara.park@independentage.org**

To help us raise funds and awareness, call **020 7605 4288** or email **supporters@independentage.org**

To find out about legacy giving and our Free Wills offer, contact **legacies@independentage.org**

To find out more about our campaigning activities, email **policy@independentage.org**

To become a volunteer, email **volunteering@independentage.org**

Supporters can donate at **www.independentage.org** or download the Snapdonate app.



I support Independent Age because...

"Everybody deserves the opportunity to be able to enjoy life and the fact that there are so many older people who struggle to do so is very troubling. I think there is something very inspiring about Independent Age as it makes a real and immediate difference to people's lives."

Rosalind, Independent Age supporter

"I have seen first-hand the difference being a volunteer visitor makes and believe passionately that there is no need for older people to suffer isolation. I became a fundraiser as well as a volunteer to help Independent Age spread the word about the great work they do."

Hannah, 2014 Royal Parks Half Marathon runner and volunteer visitor

"My father passed away last March, leaving my mother on her own at 86. I support Independent Age because they provide advice and support for my mother and others like her who are struggling to cope with life alone in their later years."

Carmelo, 2015 Virgin Money London Marathon runner



advice and support for older age

**Independent
Age**

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Beneficent Association
Registered charity number 210729



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