

In touch

The latest news, tips and stories
from Independent Age



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

March 2017 | Issue 24

Bill's story:

**"It's so nice
to have
someone
to talk to."**

Coping with bereavement

Tips to reduce loneliness

Christmas card competition!



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Do you want to receive this newsletter by email or on audio cd?

Please let us know at services.admin@independentage.org or call 020 7605 4255.

Join our Readers' Panel

Our Readers' Panel is an opportunity to have your say about our public information. Anyone can join – you don't have to be an expert – and your involvement will help us to make sure that what we produce is relevant and useful to older people and their families.

You can sign up online at independentage.org/readers-panel, or contact our Helpline for more details (0800 319 6789, advice@independentage.org).



News

You're one in a million!

We are delighted to let you know that we have seen a sharp rise in the number of older people and families approaching us for help.

In fact, last year, over 1 million people accessed support from Independent Age – many more than in the previous year.

One of the people we started helping is Bill, a 98-year-old war veteran. Bill has lived alone ever since his wife passed away over five years ago and he's also lost many of his friends.

We put him in touch with one of our volunteers, Richard, last September, and they have been speaking over the phone every week ever since.

"Bill's life experiences are incredible!"



Richard



Bill

The former 1st Army Gunner says, "I was looking for somebody to chat to and I saw an article in the local paper one week. Every Tuesday morning Richard phones me and we talk about what's happened during the week... It's so nice to have someone to talk to."

Richard, who retired 13 years ago and has been volunteering for Independent Age for the last two, says he gets as much out of the calls as Bill does. He says, "Bill was held as a Prisoner of War in Czechoslovakia and closely escaped being sentenced to death – his life experiences are incredible!"

"I think the organisation is excellent. The people at Independent Age have really helped me and I've found there is much satisfaction to be gained from volunteering."

Charities join forces in honour of Jo

Many of you will remember Jo Cox, pictured right, the Yorkshire MP who was tragically murdered last year. Before her death, Jo had been very saddened by the number of people in her constituency experiencing terrible loneliness. She had started taking steps to bring politicians from all political parties together to tackle the issue.

We are pleased to let you know that Jo's campaign is still growing. Now named The Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness in the MP's memory, the commission is working with 13 charities, including Independent Age, in a drive to encourage greater action to tackle loneliness.

Together with Age UK, the Alzheimer's Society, The Silver Line and others, we are calling on the government,



businesses and people everywhere to 'start a conversation' about loneliness. We want to encourage everyone to do more to rid society of this desperately distressing issue.

Working with all the charities involved, the commission will produce a manifesto at the end of the year outlining the next steps the country needs to take to have a genuine impact on the growing issue of loneliness.

Last month, one of the older people we support, Veronica, pictured right, shared her experience during a discussion on loneliness on BBC Radio 5 Live.

The 78-year-old talked about how she helps herself when she's feeling lonely, saying, "It's a big learning curve... You've got to keep pushing yourself and planning your day... It's about finding things that lift the spirit."



Turn to page 5 for tips on reducing loneliness.

Simon takes viewers' calls on This Morning

In February, our Director of Policy, Simon Bottery, was on the sofa with Holly Willoughby and Phillip Schofield on ITV's This Morning to answer questions on care homes.

Simon responded to calls from viewers about serious issues their loved one had faced in care homes, such as neglect and abuse. He also advised on how to go about choosing a good home.



While he emphasised that the majority of care homes look after their residents very well, he encouraged anyone facing inadequate care or abuse in a care home to make a formal complaint.

If you or someone you know is experiencing difficulties in a care home, call our Helpline on **0800 319 6789**. For more information on choosing a care home, you can order our guide, **How to find the right care home**, on the same number.

Our campaign hits the headlines

In 2016, our campaign to fix the UK's health and care services received support from thousands of people - and it's still building momentum.

In January, we wrote a letter to Theresa May signed by 75 organisations, including the Royal College of Nursing, Marie Curie and RNIB. The letter urged, "Unless you adopt a

bolder approach, millions of older, ill and disabled people and their carers will continue to be badly let down."

It received wide coverage in the national media and we received a reply from the prime minister acknowledging our concerns. The government has since announced a review of social care in the budget.

We have launched a petition which is currently at almost 16,500 signatures. To sign our petition, please go to www.independentage.org/petition

Information and advice

How to cope with bereavement

When someone dies, it can be devastating for the people left behind. Our new guide looks at how you might be feeling and things that might help you when you are grieving.

Allow yourself to grieve

Grief is a deeply personal experience and there is no set time it will take to run its course. You will probably experience a range of emotions, which can feel overwhelming. Don't tell yourself you should be feeling better before you are. Intense emotions will usually ease over time.

Talk to people

Talking about how you're feeling and your memories of the person who died are both important. You might want to talk to family and friends or to a bereavement counsellor.

Look after yourself

It's easy to stop making yourself a priority when you're grieving, but it's important to look after yourself. Be kind to yourself and do things that help you. Staying in contact with other people and keeping some



sort of structure to your day can be very helpful and prevent you from becoming too cut off, even though it might seem hard at times.

Seek support when you need it

You don't need to go through this alone – help is available from people you know and professionals. If you're worried or feel you aren't coping, speak to someone. You could try your GP, a bereavement counsellor such as Cruse (0808 808 1677) or a helpline like the Samaritans (116 123).

Take time to remember the person who died

Keeping a connection to the person who died can bring great comfort. Think about what seems appropriate – you might want to display more photos of them at home, hold on to treasured possessions or mark special days such as their birthday.



Order your free copy of **Coping with bereavement** on **0800 319 6789** or visit **www.independentage.org/bereavement-guide**

5 tips for reducing loneliness

Loneliness will feel different for us all and there is no single solution, but these top tips may help.

1. Talk about how you're feeling

The vast majority of people have experienced loneliness so they should be able to empathise with you. Opening up to others about how you're feeling could help you feel less alone and provide reassurance.

2. Learn to feel comfortable with yourself

Challenging negative thoughts about yourself can help increase your self-confidence, making it easier for you to connect with others. Try making a list of things you like about yourself or that other people have complimented you on.

3. Take it slowly

Try to do one thing a day to start interacting with people and build up slowly. For example, chat to the newsagent, say hello to the new



neighbours or phone a friend you might not have spoken to in a while.

4. Discover new ways to stay in touch

Try reconnecting with old friends through social networking sites like Facebook. Emailing, text messaging and sending letters are all good ways of keeping in touch.

5. Find a new hobby

Joining a group based on a hobby, such as a choir, drawing class or gardening group, can be another great way to meet people with similar interests.



You can order our free guide **If you're feeling lonely** on **0800 319 6789** or visit **www.independentage.org/lonely-guide**

Turn to page 8 to see how some of our readers lift their spirits when they are feeling lonely.

Getting involved

"Everybody should have somebody," says GI Joe

"I was so homesick when I moved here at 22," says Joe, who's 70, and originally from Pennsylvania in America.

Joe, who served in the US Navy, initially found it hard to make friends when he first moved to London. He vowed that, if the opportunity ever arose when he was older, he would help another person in the same boat. He says, "I swore that in later life, if ever opportunity knocked, I would give something back because you only have one life."



Joe when he was in the US Navy



Fortunately, 47 years later, Joe found the perfect opening with Independent Age. He applied to be a telephone volunteer and, last October, was put in contact with Harry, who's 81 and lives alone.

Joe says, "He's a lovely, kind gentleman who has been lonely and has had his fair share of knocks in life... He's such a nice guy and we both look forward to the conversation every week."

Urging others to give volunteering a go, he adds, "Independent Age will guide you through any grey areas and train you for the role like they did with me."

"The stigma around loneliness and older people is something that society should look at as everybody gets old. Everybody should have somebody."

If you think you might like to become a telephone volunteer, making regular calls to another older person, or if you would like to receive this service, please get in touch on 0800 319 6789.

Ready to take on 100in10?

The 100in10 virtual challenge is a brand new fundraising activity to encourage all our supporters to cover 100km in 10 weeks.

You can swim, walk, run, cycle or be as imaginative as you like – as long as you hit that 100 target.

The best thing about 100in10 is that you can do it your way and, if 100km feels too much, you can share your kilometres with others.

Here are a few ideas:

- Go for five 1km swims per week over 10 weeks with a friend.
- Go for a weekly 2.5km walk with three friends for 10 weeks.
- Or you can even bake 100 cookies over 10 weeks.

However you choose to take on the challenge, you will be raising funds for older people in need.



Call 020 7605 4274 or email daniel.magson@independentage.org to sign up.

Christmas card design competition!

Calling all artists! We're looking for a new Christmas card design for our brand new competition. You can enter a drawing, a painting or even a photograph, and the winning design will be available to purchase in our Christmas card catalogue.

Please submit your design on paper no smaller than 216mm x 154mm and send it to **Volunteering, Independent Age, 18 Avonmore Road, W14 8RR** by midnight **10 June 2017**. The winner will be notified by 21 June 2017.

If you would like more information or full terms and conditions, feel free to call us on 020 7605 4255 or email volunteering@independentage.org.

Win a cash prize in our spring raffle!

Every ticket, costing just £1, gives you the chance to win our top prize of £1,000, plus other cash runner-up prizes! For your chance to win, call our raffle hotline on 020 7605 4223. The closing date for entries is **29 May 2017**.

Your say

For our campaign with The Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness, we are encouraging everyone to 'start a conversation' about loneliness. So we asked:

How do you lift your spirits when you're feeling lonely?



John, Office Services Manager

"As I live on my own, I can get lonely at weekends. I am very fortunate to live close to local shops, a supermarket and the Post Office. When I'm grocery shopping, I always ask the checkout person, 'How are you today?' One lady once replied, 'No one has asked me that before!' I made contact with a local café owner in the same way. I find that most people are happy to chat once you make the effort."



Freda, who receives regular calls from Independent Age

"These days, if my thoughts are beginning to dip, it's easier to stir up the happiness of memories with thoughts of thankfulness. I'm reminded of a child's drawing I once saw on a Sunday school wall. Accompanying the picture of a smile, were the words: 'If you see someone today without a smile, give them one of yours.'"



Richard, Telephone Volunteer

"I spend some time on my own but am rarely lonely. One reason is because I enjoy planning and looking forward, which is why the privilege of volunteering for Independent Age is so rewarding. I have the opportunity to telephone and talk to and hear about such interesting people."

The question for the next issue is:

What do you think of our new-look In Touch?

Let us know by emailing comms@independentage.org or writing to: **Communications Team, Independent Age, 18 Avonmore Road, London, W14 8RR.** We'd love to hear from you.

Our free advice guides

Our practical, jargon-free advice guides give you the information you need to get the most out of older age.



Advice for later life – support and entitlements for over-65s

Extra help at home – essential advice for over-65s to live independently

Moneywise – how to boost your income and save money

Staying in control when you're older – how to avoid being mistreated and what to do if it happens

If you're feeling lonely – how to stay connected in older age

Being winter wise – helping you to look after yourself during the coldest months

How to find the right care home – where to start and what to consider

Coping with bereavement – living with grief and loss

Dealing with depression – how to recognise the signs and the action you can take

To order your free advice guides, call 0800 319 6789 or visit www.independentage.org

Free Helpline for older people, their families and carers



We give free, confidential advice over the telephone on care and support, money and benefits, and health and mobility.

Our advice and information services are completely impartial. We do not sell products or services and we do not receive a payment from any organisation for recommending their products or services.

Call our freephone line on

0800 319 6789

Monday to Friday, 8am-8pm

Weekends and bank holidays, 9am-5pm

You can also email us at advice@independentage.org



advice and support for older age

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