



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



**Planning for  
the future:  
Our 2017 General  
Election manifesto**



# Foreword

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This election is crucial for older people. By 2030, there will be an estimated 15.7 million people in the UK aged 65 and over. Whilst this presents vast opportunities for us as a society, with more people living healthy lives and contributing to society into later life, it also presents some challenges.

Across the country, older people, their families and their carers have worries about the future which urgently need addressing. Despite some progress in recent years, over a million older people still aren't getting all the care that they need. Just under 2 million pensioners are still living in poverty.

It doesn't have to be this way. Now more than ever, we need bold thinking to ensure that health and social care, pensions and our public services are equipped to deal with a growing older population.

Independent Age is campaigning to make the UK the best country in the world to grow older. We are determined to put older peoples' voices at the heart of policy and protect those most at risk of poverty, isolation and ill health.

Without decisive action from the next Government, we risk falling further behind when in fact the UK needs to get ready – now – for millions more of us living longer lives.

We look forward to working with you, so we can ensure the next Government delivers on our vision.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janet Morrison'.

**Janet Morrison**  
**Chief Executive, Independent Age**

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# Independent Age manifesto for 2017 General Election

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## Redoubling efforts to tackle pensioner poverty

Despite successive governments making pensioner poverty a priority, 1.9 million older people across the UK still live in poverty. Struggles paying for heating and food and worries about money have a huge impact on older people's health and wellbeing. It will be up to the next Government to ensure that all older people are financially supported in later life, by increasing uptake of Pension Credit for the poorest pensioners and maintaining an adequate State Pension.

### Our challenge to the next Government

- Significantly increase uptake of Pension Credit amongst the estimated 1.4 million eligible older people who do not currently claim it but are entitled to receive this vital weekly income.
- Carefully consider the impact of any changes to the State Pension on the poorest pensioners, protecting those who stand to lose most from any reforms.

## Reforming funding for care and support

In England, 1.2 million older people live without all the social care that they need. The reality is that our social care system has been in crisis for too long, with successive governments simply plugging the gaps rather than committing to the radical reform it needs. Independent Age has been calling for a sustainable, long-term settlement for social care and, whilst we welcome any new funding for care, much more still needs to be done. The next Government will need to urgently establish the main options for funding the system so it is sustainable well into the future and deliver a plan to introduce the reforms within the next Parliament.

### Our challenge to the next Government

- Set out a comprehensive vision for a sustainable social care system that better integrates existing services to deliver higher quality care for older people.
- Reform the way the state-funded care system works for those with the fewest resources but also protect private payers against extremely high care costs.

## Urgent action on the quality of care

The Care Quality Commission, the watchdog for care services in England, has warned that the system is nearing a "tipping point". There are big challenges that still need addressing, for example, ensuring we have the workforce in place to meet growing demand for care. It is likely that the UK will continue to rely on migrant workers in health and care, at least in the short term but the profession needs more workers to close a projected workforce gap. Gaps in quality of care, which varies greatly, also need to be addressed. Elsewhere, there is an alarming information gap that needs to be fixed to help the public confidently plan for and choose care, where today negative perceptions of elderly care predominate.

## Our challenge to the next Government

- **Reflect the needs of the care workforce in any changes to immigration policy, to meet the projected needs of an ageing population but also strengthen efforts to fill vacancies from within the UK workforce too.**
- **Provide strong leadership to increase transparency on performance and quality in adult care, especially in the care homes market, so older people and their families have access to the right kind of information when making a choice of provider.**



## Funding an NHS fit for the 21st Century

In hospitals and GP surgeries many NHS services are doing a good job but to effectively meet the needs of an ageing population, we need a shift in the way services are provided. These need to be designed to better reflect older people's typically long-term, chronic needs, with increased access to treatment in the community and an emphasis on prevention, re-ablement and integration of health and social care. With the NHS always a key area for investment, it is important that the next Government seeks new solutions to the problems the health service faces.

### Our challenge to the next Government

- Ensure service users and patients are fully involved in new programmes aimed at transforming NHS services and that these are aimed at driving greater integration.
- Provide leadership on developing new models of care, including greater support for the many family carers who work whilst looking after a relative and growing numbers of older carers too.

## Delivering better mental health care regardless of age

The principle of 'parity' so mental health services receive the same priority as other healthcare services underpins many recent developments across the NHS. There has been a strong recognition that more support should be provided to people with dementia as the population rapidly ages. But there isn't always the same appreciation of the mental health problems older people experience and the stigma that needs tackling so they can effectively reach out and receive support. With more than a million older people saying they feel lonely all or most of the time, Independent Age will be seeking assurances from the next Government that they plan to tackle this growing issue.

### Our challenge to the next Government

- Meet the growing demand for help with mental health problems, for all age groups.
- Develop ambitious plans to tackle the isolation and loneliness that can lead to older people experiencing depression and a drop in wellbeing.



## Building age-friendly communities

With more people living longer, healthier lives, it is vital that communities are inclusive of older people so they can remain independent and stay connected. Accessible, affordable public transport makes a crucial difference and helps to guard against isolation. Similarly, it's important to provide a range of housing options to ensure that older people can live comfortably and on their terms.

### Our challenge to the next Government

- Where they need support to make home adaptations, or move home, older people should be able to access help that is affordable and with the minimum of delay.
- It's vital that the next Government harnesses older people's contributions so they can remain fully involved in society; in work, as volunteers and throughout their communities.



## Understanding the barriers to better life in older age

Society is changing, and whilst this provides us with real opportunities, it is also a challenge for which all public services need to get better prepared. It's vital that the Government understands how pensions, benefits, the NHS, social care and other policy issues like housing all impact on older people, joining up across departments to deliver a more strategic vision to help the UK "get ready for ageing". Independent Age is campaigning to make the UK the best place in the world to grow older and we'll be calling on the next Government to help make that a reality.

### Our challenge to the next Government

- Avoid the 'old versus young' rhetoric that has characterised political debate in the past and instead take a life-course approach helping everyone to effectively plan for later life.
- Tackle the inequalities that exist within, as well those that still exist between, generations recognising there are many poor pensioners, especially those aged 75 and older who make up the 'Silent Generation' of over-75s who lived through the Second War.

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# Acknowledgements

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Independent Age is a non-partisan charity that campaigns on the issues that matter to older people, their families and carers. We work with parliamentarians from

across all political parties, as well as with Government and the civil service to put older peoples' voices at the heart of policy.

If you're a policymaker and would like to find out more about how you can get involved, email [publicaffairs@independentage.org](mailto:publicaffairs@independentage.org)



Whatever happens as we get older, we all want to remain independent and live life on our own terms. That's why, as well as offering regular friendly contact and a strong campaigning voice, Independent Age can provide you and your family with clear, free and impartial advice on the issues that matter: care and support, money and benefits, health and mobility. A charity founded over 150 years ago, we're independent so you can be.

For more information, visit our website at [www.independentage.org](http://www.independentage.org)

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