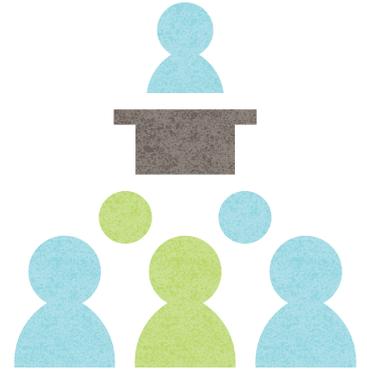


# Question time:

## Organising a hustings to raise the issues affecting older people



## Campaigning at Independent Age

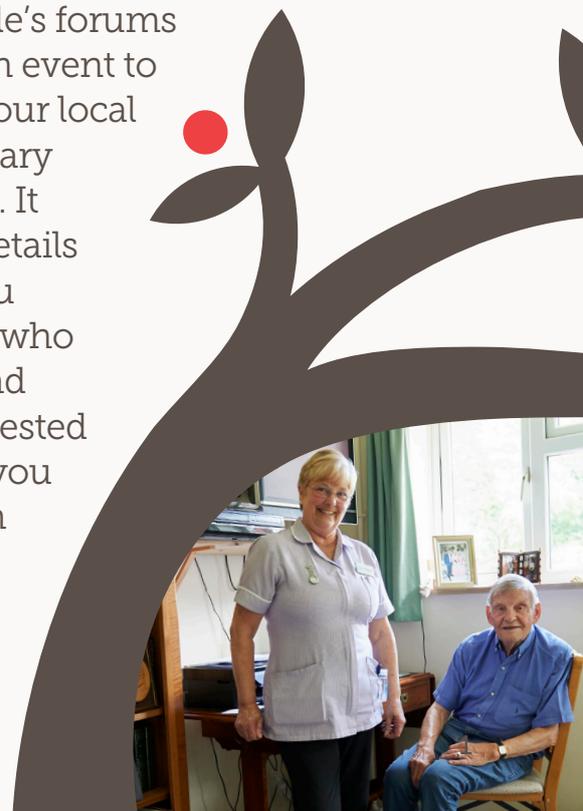
Every day we hear from older people and their families about the challenges they face. That is why we campaign with our supporters to make the UK the best place in the world to grow older. From demanding a better deal on social care services to ensuring everyone is financially secure, we work to influence political parties and other decision-makers to bring about positive and lasting change for older people.

Whatever happens, we all want to remain independent and live life on our own terms as we get older. It's important that the people who represent us understand that and, if elected, work to improve the lives of older people, and their families.

Thanks to our network of supporters across the country, we have continually campaigned to raise the issues and concerns of older people with the decision-makers who have the power to make change happen.

However, we must continue to ensure these voices are heard in the run-up to a General Election. During an election period, candidates will try and speak to as many people as possible and want to hear from constituents about the issues that are important to them. Together, we can make sure our new Members of Parliament arrive at Westminster fully understanding the views and priorities of older people.

We have developed this hustings pack to help individuals, groups and older people's forums organise an event to question your local parliamentary candidates. It contains details of what you should do, who to invite and some suggested questions you might wish to ask.





## What is a hustings?

Hustings are open meetings held in the run-up to an election. They usually bring together candidates from across the political spectrum to discuss a range of issues or policies. Candidates are asked questions by a Chairperson, or by audience members, and local people have the chance to hear the views of their political candidates on different local or national issues.

## Why should you host a hustings?

Hustings are incredibly important as they increase people's knowledge of their political candidates and support their ability to make an informed decision about who to vote for. At Independent Age, we want the needs of older people to be represented when politicians make decisions and the lead-up to a General Election is the perfect time to ensure these issues are on their radar.

# How to host a hustings

## When

- **Think carefully about what time to host your event.** If you choose a time during the day, this may be easier for people who are retired, or who aren't currently working, but it would limit the number of people in employment who are able to attend.
- **Make sure you allow enough time for discussion at the event.** A hustings usually lasts between 1.5 and 2 hours.

## Venue

- **Choose a location that is central to the constituency.** Church halls or community centres are often a good first point of contact when trying to find a venue, but the most important thing is that the venue is easy for everyone to get to.

- **Ensure that the venue is accessible.** This includes considering transport links such as bus routes and parking availability as well as the accessibility of the building itself. Ideally the venue should have a wheelchair ramp and enough space for attendees to sit down.
- **Select a venue with good acoustics.** It is really important that attendees can hear what the candidates are saying. You may want a venue with a sound system that has microphones but, failing that, pick a venue with low ceilings to try and avoid an echo.



## Inviting candidates

- **You should invite the main candidates in your area.** You do not have to invite all candidates but if you have not invited a candidate, you must have an objective reason for this. Reasons for not inviting a candidate could be that they are not likely to get many votes, or that those invited are the most likely to win the constituency. Disagreeing with a candidate's views is not a valid reason to not invite them.
- It may be worth liaising with candidates from the main parties informally beforehand to try and work around their diaries to ensure they can attend.
- Send a formal invitation to the candidate with the date, time and venue of the hustings as soon as you can.

## Format

- **Seat the candidates and the hosts at the front of the hall** where everyone can see them, ideally on a raised platform if possible.
- Make sure the room is well lit and appropriately heated.
- Have a few volunteers on the door to welcome attendees and invite them to sit down.
- Before the event starts, ensure the Chairperson explains the format of the event to the audience and the rules for asking questions.

- At the start of the event, each candidate should make a 2-minute opening statement outlining their priorities. The order should be randomly selected and the timing should be moderated by the Chair.
- Questions can be asked by the Chair, the audience or a mixture of both. It is important to ensure questions cover a wide-range of policy areas and focus on both local and national issues. See some suggested questions from Independent Age on pages 6 and 7.
- At the end of the event, allow each candidate 2 minutes to make a short closing statement.



## Chairperson and questions

- **The Chairperson moderates the debate.** Often, the Chair is the person who asks the questions to the candidates but they are also responsible for fielding questions from the audience and ensuring candidates answer them.
- When selecting a Chair, you will want to find someone who is familiar with political issues and has experience of moderating discussions between different people – **the leader of your local older people's group or a local journalist would be a good option.**

- Before selecting questions, it is important to decide whether you want to host a general hustings covering a range of issues or whether you want to focus on older people's issues directly.
- **You also need to decide who will ask and write questions.**
  - Will questions be asked by audience members or by the Chair?
  - Will you ask for questions to be sent in advance or will they be recorded by the Chair on the night?
  - Will you do a mixture of both?
- Make sure that the Chair and candidates have a schedule for the event so they know how long will be spent on each question.



- Writing to members of your local older people's forum in a newsletter.
- Putting posters on community noticeboards.
- Asking candidates to promote the event through their own communication channels.

## Inviting journalists

- You may also want to invite local journalists to come and cover the event. Contact your local newspaper, regional news and local radio station to let them know the event is happening.
- You could also share pictures and details of the event with your local paper afterwards.

## Advertising

It is really important to advertise your event well to ensure good attendance. Ways to advertise the event could include:

- Sending a letter to the editor in your local paper.
- Social media posts.

## Letting Independent Age know

We would love to hear from you if you attend a local hustings or ask your local candidates questions in another setting. **Please do let us know by emailing the Campaigns team on [campaigns@independentage.org](mailto:campaigns@independentage.org) or calling us on 020 7605 4478.**

### What Independent Age wants from political parties at this election:

- 1** A commitment to introduce **free personal care** in England for everyone over the age of 65 to ensure that all older people have their basic care needs met free at the point of use, like the NHS.
- 2** A commitment to introduce targets and develop an action plan so that those who are entitled to **Pension Credit** receive it, to ensure that everyone can grow older with dignity.

## Question time checklist

Use our handy checklist to keep track of what you need to do to before, during and after the event. It would be great if you can do as many of these as possible, but we appreciate that time is limited so don't feel pressured to get through everything.

Things to do	Completed? (Tick)
<b>Before the event</b>	
Agree a date and time to host the event	
Arrange a location – remember to make sure it's accessible and has good acoustics	
Invite the main candidates in your area with a formal invitation including date, time and venue	
Select someone to Chair the event – maybe the leader of your local older people's group or a local journalist	
Decide how you will be selecting questions – see suggested questions from Independent Age on pages 6 and 7	
Invite journalists from your local paper, regional news and radio station	
Advertise details of your event in local papers, on social media and on noticeboards in the area	
Ask candidates to advertise the event on their own social media	
<b>On the day</b>	
Greet candidates and show them to their seats	
Seat the candidates at the front of the hall	
Have a few volunteers on the door to welcome attendees and invite them to sit down	
<b>After the event</b>	
Write to candidates to thank them for attending	
Send photos and a short summary to your local paper	

# Independent Age campaigns

## Let's Get Personal



As we grow older many of us rely on the care system to provide support for tasks like washing, dressing or preparing a meal, but after decades of neglect social care is in crisis.

Free personal care would give all older people the support they need with the most essential tasks. Free personal care would benefit people who live in their own home and those who live in a residential home. It would significantly reduce the amount people are required to spend, and would mean people get help earlier.

### Free personal care suggested questions

- **Do you agree that all people over 65 should be entitled to free personal care?**
- **Do you have any reasons why free personal care should not be introduced?**
- **Will you pledge to campaign for free personal care if you are elected and to work in the next parliament to make this a reality?**

## Key stats

**330,000 people** have sold their home in the last 20 years to fund their care.

**78% of the population** in England (18+) believe personal care should be free for those who need it, and **74%** said they would be willing to contribute more to fund it.

For the first couple of years an income tax rise of **1%** would cover the costs of the social care system and cost a UK average earner about **£3** a week.

## Credit Where It's Due



As a financial top-up for those pensioners most in need, Pension Credit helps to ensure that older people do not have to choose between eating or heating their home. However, the sad

reality is that there are more than a million older people who are missing out on the Pension Credit they are entitled to.

Independent Age is calling on the Government to set and commit to targets of at least 75% of eligible people receiving Pension Credit by the end of 2020, and at least 85% by the end of 2022. To reach these targets, the Government must also put in place an ambitious action plan to tackle the problems with the current system.

## Pension Credit suggested questions

- **Millions of pounds of Pension Credit doesn't reach the pockets of the hardest pressed older people in our constituency. Should the Government do more to ensure those entitled to it receive it?**
- **If elected, would you support introducing government targets around Pension Credit uptake?**
- **Why do you think older people are not getting the Pension Credit they are entitled to?**

## Key stats

**£3.5 billion** of money set aside for this vital benefit doesn't reach the pockets of those who are entitled to receive it.

**£10 million** pounds a day is not reaching the poorest pensioners in our society.

## Keeping it local

There is nothing more powerful and compelling than sharing real-life experiences and figures from your area with local candidates. We have estimated how many people are missing out on Pension Credit for every constituency in Great Britain, and by how much. To find out how many millions of pounds is not reaching the pockets of those entitled to this lifeline in your area visit our website here:

**<https://bit.ly/32V4aOO>**

Alternatively give us a call on 020 7605 4478 and we can give these figures to you over the phone.

## Join the conversation

Share your event on social media and don't forget to tag us

 [facebook.com/independentage](https://www.facebook.com/independentage)

 [@independentage](https://twitter.com/independentage)

 [@independentage](https://www.instagram.com/independentage)

For more information about our campaigns, visit our website: [independentage.org/campaigning](https://independentage.org/campaigning)

## Contact us

If you are hosting a hustings, or are attending a hustings hosted by someone else, we would love to hear from you. Please do let us know by emailing the Campaigns team on [campaigns@independentage.org](mailto:campaigns@independentage.org) or calling us on **020 7605 4478**.