

Volunteer Newsletter

 **Independent
Age**

APRIL 2021



Welcome to spring!

I hope you are all well and enjoying some warmer weather, wherever you are. I'm excited to introduce our new Volunteer Newsletter. As opposed to our Volunteer Update, which provides important information for you to fulfil your roles, these newsletters will focus on good news stories, highlights from the charity and give you, as volunteers, a chance to share your experiences.

It's been more than a year since we were placed into a national lockdown, and what a year it's been. So, the Volunteering team and I would like to thank you for all that you've done throughout this period. We know it's been tough, but we also know what an incredible impact you have made as volunteers, both for us as a charity but also for older people. You have provided invaluable support to many

and have been a vital source of hope and positivity.

Although we still have some hurdles to overcome, I hope you are looking forward to the future and returning to normal when we can.

Wishing you all the very best.

Kelly Butler
**Head of Volunteering
Transformation**



Staying connected



Christina's story

We're living in strange and unexpected times and there's so much that's tough about our new way of life. But what I love is the way people have pulled together, helping each other. For me, this feels like an opportunity to share everything we have in common, even if that's from a distance. And one of the best ways we can do this is by listening.

I'm a telephone volunteer for Independent Age, so I know what an important and vital thing it is to listen well. Checking in with people, giving them the opportunity to talk and to feel truly heard can make such a difference.

Usually I call my gentleman once a week, at the same time on the same day. Since the lockdown I'm calling him far more. We talk together about how we feel about the daily news updates and the statistics of deaths. Neither of us forgets that each number represents a human life and a family. We're making sure everyone is remembered and acknowledged, and that's as it should be.

We talk about the fact that our families can't visit us

and we can't visit them; the loneliness that this can bring and the feelings of relief knowing our loved ones are taking care of themselves. We cheer each other up about positive stories we've heard. There's never been a more important time to share something funny and have a smile on your face.

It's so important for people to know that even if we can't see each other face to face, we can still be in contact. We can learn and listen and nurture each other.

We must allow ourselves that time to pause, think and find new ways to look after ourselves and other people. And one way to do that is to pick up the phone.

Judith's story

I used to live in a house where I had more friends, and I had neighbours who were good to me. I went out most days. But I couldn't see the last step when I was walking down the stairs and I'd fall down and my ankle would go.

This meant I needed to move into a flat, so I came here, but I left my friends behind from the other house. I was so much lonelier here. One thing that helped was that I started getting visits from Independent Age. This filled a hole. Now I see Sophie. Sophie helped me just by seeing her face and having a chat. Sometimes that's all it needs to brighten someone's day.

But I'd only seen Sophie a couple of times before the lockdown started. I thought I wouldn't see her again.

I was already spending a lot of time by myself. Now I thought I would be completely alone. All my clubs have closed. I used to go to the community day centre – all closed. I couldn't go to church. I thought Sophie was finished.

Then Sophie rang! That's great. I have someone to see and have a chat with. I do get very down, very isolated and it helps that I speak to Sophie. We talk about how we are and what we've done. She's a laugh and it really helps me.

I'm so pleased I have Independent Age to talk to. You have helped

me tremendously. With coronavirus, every day is the same. What you do is talk to people who are lonely, haven't got friends or neighbours, and that's a wonderful thing.

Your stories

Hearing first hand your experiences really brings volunteering to life and provides an insight into those special and memorable moments.

If you'd like to share your story, just email volunteering@independentage.org to let us know you're interested and we'll be in touch.





A spotlight on...

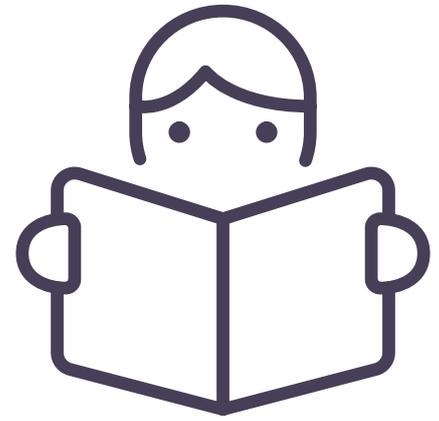
The Information team

How we can help you

As a team, we produce all the information available from Independent Age. We write about topics that matter to older people, such as money, housing, health and wellbeing, social care and staying independent. Currently we have more than 250 web pages, as well as 25 guides and 32 factsheets, which are available to order or download from independentage.org/publications. Our publications

are accredited by the PIF TICK scheme, which guarantees that they've been through a strict quality control process.

You might want to offer our free guides to the older person you support, or encourage them to order some from our Helpline on 0800 319 6789. If you're not sure what information is most relevant, please get in touch at dawn.mccarthy@independentage.org and we can point you in the right direction.

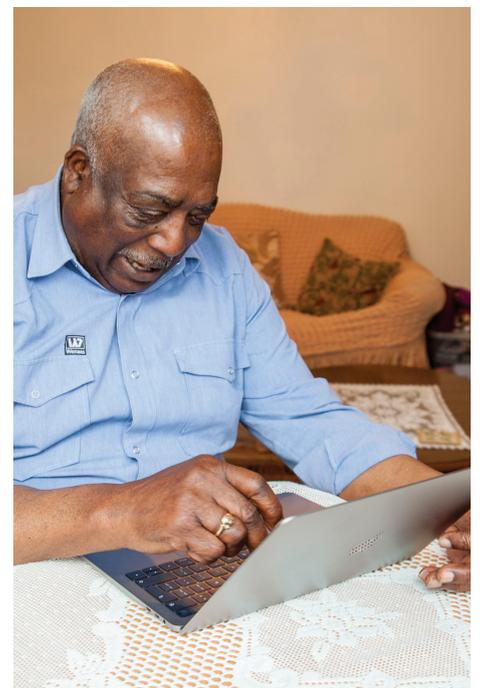


Readers' Panel

A big part of our process is getting feedback from our volunteers on the Readers' Panel. They help us to improve the accuracy of the content, the flow, readability and design of our information.

So far this year we've asked for feedback on a new factsheet about underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance, new designs for our advice guides, and the information home page on our website.

If you'd like to join, you can sign up at independentage.org/information/join-our-readers-panel or by calling 0800 319 6789. You don't need any special knowledge and it's up to you how often you take part.





Our highlights



COVID-19 Correspondents: Raising your voice

In November 2020 we put out a call to our campaigners asking for people to join a new group of COVID-19 Correspondents. We weren't quite sure how many people would be up for this so were overjoyed when more than 300 campaigners signed up.

Our COVID-19 Correspondents have been answering weekly surveys on a range of different topics related to the pandemic, such as receiving the vaccine, how lockdown affects their mental health or how they are currently accessing food. The insight they've given has been so valuable to us and has kept all our work grounded in the experiences of older people.



Join us!

For those of you who like to keep in touch via social media, come and join us on our Facebook group called Independent Age Volunteers at [facebook.com/groups/independentagevolunteers](https://www.facebook.com/groups/independentagevolunteers). This is a space for you to get to know other volunteers, share your experiences and keep up to date with the Volunteering team. Just follow the steps to join and discover our community of volunteers.

Don't forget you can also join our main social media platforms – Facebook, Instagram and Twitter – if you'd like to keep up to date with all things Independent Age.



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