



August 2021

Support Matters

from Independent Age



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Welcome



Coming through a challenging time – be it a bereavement, a period of increased demand or a lockdown – gives us a chance to catch our collective breath and reflect.

You've been doing this with us, and for us, in your work volunteering and supporting older people, as well as in your survey responses, where we've been delighted to see such enthusiastic support for the work we do. Thank you for reflecting on what's important and interesting to you.

Some of our befrienders have been thinking about what makes volunteering special for them. Dan and Tony, on page 6, find that age doesn't matter when it comes to friendship, while Josie looks back at the inspiring older people she's met in her 20 years as a volunteer, on page 5. We've also seen in the past months how incredibly important – but hard to access – bereavement support is. Our new campaign, Time to grieve, aims to make this a bigger priority for government – see page 4.

As we come out of lockdown, it's important to take stock of what we've all been through and remember that issues affecting older people, like anxiety and isolation, remain. It's together, as a charity and a community, that we will move forward.



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Nominate us at work

We need companies to help support vital services

*Nominating Independent Age to be part of a pandemic funding scheme could help support the most vulnerable through this crisis right now, says **Shyam Matharu**, Corporate Partnerships Manager.*

Many companies and employers have generously made emergency funds available to charities like Independent Age throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

This financial support has enabled charities like us to continue supporting the most vulnerable people through a time of crisis, by delivering national and local community services to tackle issues around social inequality, loneliness, poverty, and health and care. Your employer might already

run a scheme like this. You could help by nominating Independent Age to be considered for funding. All you need handy are our charity numbers: 210729 in England and SC047184 in Scotland.

Family and friends can also help. If they're employed by a company running a charity funding scheme, they can nominate Independent Age on your behalf.

If you're not sure whether your employer runs such a scheme, you could try asking your corporate social responsibility (CSR) team, or environmental, social and governance (ESG) team, or corporate foundation team.

If Independent Age is selected to benefit from funding like this, every pound donated would go towards our mission to ensure that as we grow older, we all have the opportunity to live well with dignity, choice and purpose.

You can find out more – or let us know about a company or employer you think we should talk to – from me at shyam.matharu@independantage.org.

Please get in touch or nominate Independent Age for a corporate funding scheme today. ■

“Emergency funding has enabled charities like us to continue supporting the most vulnerable people.”

The Independent Age Grants Fund has helped an array of related charities to support older people through the pandemic – and become a permanent part of how we work.

When lockdown restrictions were first introduced, many of us turned to our immediate neighbours or communities – either for support or to offer support.

The charity sector was no different. Across the country, organisations were hit by huge growth in demand for their services, while social distancing restrictions curtailed normal fundraising activity.

We recognised that our 'community' – other charities working tirelessly with older people across the country – was in real danger from this perfect storm. By establishing the Independent Age Grants Fund, we've tried to do our bit to help.

With your support, in less than 12 months we've processed more than 1,200 applications and made 277 grants of up to £15,000, awarding £3.3 million in total.

We've been able to support organisations from the Kent coast to the Outer Hebrides, from small community groups to national charities, each one committed to doing their best for the older people they work with.

Initially, the Grants Fund was established as an emergency response to the pandemic, funding vital support services such as food parcel deliveries, online and telephone support services, carer respite and outreach welfare advice, to alleviate the impact of the lockdown restrictions – all with a focus on those in the most challenging circumstances.

Through our funding rounds this year we've focused on supporting organisations re-establish those face-to-face services that are so crucial in reconnecting individuals with their wider community.

By working in partnership with other charities, we can reach more older people than we could directly reach ourselves – in fact, we estimate that our grants have supported more than 53,000 older people. And our smaller grants have helped build the capacity and capability of the organisations themselves, helping to attract more funding from other sources.

Through the commitment of several corporate partners, trusts and foundations, we've managed to secure almost £900,000 to add to the £2.4 million committed from our own reserves.

Grant-making is now an established part of Independent Age's business model, supporting our wider policy aims and direct services and, with your support, helping to drive better outcomes for older people. ■

The power of community

Supporting the community of older people's charities



Time to grieve

Join our campaign to fix bereavement support

We're calling on the government to make access to emotional support after a bereavement a priority, says Ollie Steadman, Campaigns Officer.



In May we launched our latest campaign calling for better access to emotional support following a bereavement.

We've estimated that up to 300,000 people over 65 have been bereaved of a partner since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bereavement – and the grieving process that follows – is often difficult, but the restrictions on important rituals like funerals and social contact with family and friends have forced people to cope without the forms of support that would usually be in place.

Sue, one of our amazing campaigners, explains how helpful the support she received was after her husband's death in 2008.

"The hospice had a follow-on group which helped a lot – I went along for about a year after my husband died," says Sue.

"In the first sessions, I felt very upset and had one-to-one conversations with the nurse or local vicar but, eventually, I felt

able to join the group sessions.

"It was really helpful to be able to get to know people in my situation and have a laugh while doing things like art or other therapies.

"I really don't think I could have coped without the hospice's follow-on group. I gained a real support network and it opened up a social life for me again after caring for my husband. I attended the group for about a year and I'm still meeting up almost weekly, restrictions allowing, with people I met in the groups – and that's nearly 12 years later!"

It's terrific to hear about the positive impact of the support Sue was able to access. Sadly, this isn't available to everyone. Whether it's information and advice, counselling, support groups or online forums, we want to see support available to those who need it.

You can join our campaign today to improve access to bereavement support. Add your name to our open letter: campaigns.independentage.org/time-to-grieve-sm.

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Information and advice, counselling, support groups or online forums – we want to see support available to those who need it.



Years of friendship

Volunteering can have a profoundly positive impact on your life, says Eleanor Killner, Volunteering Engagement Assistant – and volunteer Josie agrees.

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I think you get more out of volunteering than you give.

Volunteering gives you the chance to meet new people and find out about the interesting lives others have led. And, for many of our befriending volunteers, the person they support becomes a genuine and lifelong friend.

This is certainly true for Josie who has been volunteering for Independent Age for more than 20 years. Here she reflects on some of the inspiring people she's met, the stories she's heard, and the memories and friendships she's made.

Josie "I'm now 75 and started volunteering when I came back from living abroad. We'd lived in four different countries by then. Having had a rather privileged life, I felt it would be good to give something back."

"Over the years I've visited many older people who have all led different lives and have stories to tell: a concert pianist, a widow who is a real livewire,

a lovely man who once lived in Zimbabwe, even a lady who likes to sing and dance in village shows.

"I'm always pleased to see them and think they're pleased to see me! We chat and old memories pop up. This can lift their spirits.

"I've visited some of the same people for years and years, and you do get close to them. In fact, some of them haven't been much older than me! I chatter away and it's rewarding to feel that some good may come out of my visits.

"Older people have so much pride in what they've done and are willing to talk about it. They can tell me anything. Knowing them and enjoying their company has enriched my life and added an extra dimension.

"I would urge anyone thinking about volunteering to do it. It's not much time out of the week – and I think you get more out of it than you give."



Opposite numbers

Old and new combine
in friendship

Tony and his telephone befriende **Dan** have bonded over cooking, technology and being active, proving that age doesn't matter when it comes to friendship.

Dan and Tony's friendship thrived despite the restrictions on meeting up.

Dan "It meant a lot to me when I met Tony for the first time.

"It was just after restrictions ended and we'd been talking on the phone

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There's a lifetime between us. But age doesn't matter when it comes to friendship.

for months. When I saw him standing outside the pub, it was one of the cutest things I've ever seen. He was nicely dressed in a suit and a tie, and his hair was combed back. It was quite a special occasion for him.

"I look forward to my calls with Tony and enjoy the conversations. We've been talking for about 15 months now and it's a friendship.

"The age difference makes it more interesting. I enjoy hearing about things I've no clue about, and he has a lifetime of experiences. We're both big foodies so talk a lot about food.

"I'd recommend that other people volunteer as a befriende for Independent Age. It isn't a huge amount of time out of my life and not too difficult to fit in. I work in banking. I like getting out and being active. When I'm walking home from the office, or along the towpath, I can just pick up the phone to give Tony a call.

"Tony says he enjoys a chat and having somebody to talk to. I like helping people and it's rewarding to know that I'm making a positive difference to his life. It's a good feeling."

Tony "I'm usually in the lounge when I chat to young Dan, my opposite number in London. His working day is spent indoors and he likes to get some fresh air.

"Dan is 30 and I'm 83, divorced and living alone. That's more than 50 years between us – a lifetime. But age doesn't matter when it comes to friendship. Chatting to Dan cheers up my day.

"I used to be very active and that always kept me fit and healthy.

Cycling was my passion. During my army career I went to Borneo, Hong Kong, Cyprus, Norway and Sweden. I enjoyed the travelling and the comradeship and raced for the army cycling team. Later I became a caretaker and school bus driver and worked until I was 70. I thoroughly enjoyed my life.

"Life changed after I retired, and my health began to deteriorate. In 2006 I was diagnosed with cancer. That really set me back. I also have arthritis; I have pain in my joints and that restricts my walking. And I had to give up cycling after a fall. Now I live a quiet life.

"Dan and I started chatting on the telephone at the start of the pandemic, when I wasn't able to get out. We'd been talking for months before we first met, at a pub about five miles from where I live in Dorset. We had a meal there and a chat outside. It was lovely to have his company and meet him.

"We chat every week now, usually for an hour on a Tuesday evening. We've discovered we both have an interest in cooking. If I haven't heard of an ingredient in a recipe, he'll tell me what it is. I have a recipe book in my kitchen that came out in 1946. And I sent Dan a recipe book. He looks up recipes for me on the internet, too. It's a good combination of the old and the new. He's even helped me to use my smartphone.

"I think it's very important for older people to have someone to talk to. Dan has become a friend. I admire him for volunteering, and I enjoy talking to him very much."



Value added

Volunteering stimulates the mind as well as the heart

Thinking on the past brings out hopes for the future, finds volunteer and Queen's Award for Voluntary Service winner Beverley.

Talking to Joan, the lady I visit for Independent Age, makes me see the world in a different way. Joan often tells me what happened years ago in the area where we both live. Now, every time I go for a walk, I find myself seeing the area differently, imagining what it was like in the past.

It's fascinating to hear how Joan spent time as a child and the hardships she went through, especially in war time. She's made me realise there will soon be a time when no one will be alive who had those experiences.

It also reminds me how important it is to talk to today's children about how much we have now. It's so easy for us all to take comforts for granted. Being a volunteer brings all of this to the fore.

Spending time with Joan also makes me feel valued, and glad to know I can cheer her up and support her.

I started volunteering eight years ago. I took redundancy from my job in banking and offered my services as a volunteer, for older people through Independent Age and for younger people, too, at a local children's hospice.

I started by visiting an older lady and became very close to her. I was

visiting her until she died aged 99, just two weeks before her 100th birthday. Her death had a profound effect on me. It felt like losing my own grandmother. But I felt so pleased for the time I spent with her. Valuable moments like that stay with me still.

Visiting for Independent Age has also shown me how important it is for older people to live independently for as long as possible. This makes me think about my mother in 10 or 15 years' time, about what she'll need and what I'll do for her.

I love offering my support and friendship to those who need it and feel so grateful that I can make a difference to people's lives. ■

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Talking to Joan makes me see the world in a different way.

Volunteering proves that you can create a special bond with anyone, says volunteer Michaela.

I have wanted to volunteer for as long as I can remember. Every time I see older people who are lonely it makes me feel sad. No one should be alone.

Two years ago, I broke my leg badly in a motorbike accident, and the time off work gave me a chance to seek out volunteering.

Independent Age matched me with Poppy. I remember the first time we met. I was so nervous that Poppy wouldn't like me or want to see me again. I worried we wouldn't find things to talk about. Soon I realised that, without searching for it, we had more in common than I could have ever imagined.

We need to do more for the generation that came before us. We have so much to learn from them and need to give back. It costs me nothing to visit Poppy and chat with her, apart from my time and energy. It's the least I can do because the reward I get from these visits is priceless.

Every time Poppy opens the door, she seems happy to see me. I can see that my visits make a difference to her. I started by spending an hour with her and now we talk for two hours. I sit on the sofa, Poppy sits in her favourite armchair, and we sip coffee together while having a chat.

Poppy talks a lot about losing her husband, Paul. She shows me photos of when they got married and tells me stories of how they met. It's made me admire her strength and how she's carried on. By coincidence, Paul was born in Slovakia – the same country I'm from. This link feels very close to my heart.

Now, because of coronavirus, I talk to Poppy three times a week on the phone, instead of visiting. I'm so grateful to have this special time with her.

Until you've done it, you don't realise what an amazing thing volunteering is to do. I believe now that you can create a special bond with anyone. ■



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I believe now that you can create a special bond with anyone.



Lives well lived

We remember people
in unique ways

Be it celebrating life, legacy giving or in-memory giving, we all commemorate people's lives in different ways, reflects Sophie Brown, Legacy Giving Manager.

After a challenging year, I can't help but reflect on my own personal loss. Fortunately, only one individual close to me died – my grandmother's beloved Border Terrier dog, Bella. She was my grandmother's closest friend, so I'll take time to remember her on 5 July, National Pet Remembrance Day.

Where I'm finding a personal approach to remembering a beloved pet, I know others have had to say goodbye to grandparents, partners, friends and acquaintances in the past year. The grieving process has been different for each of them – and, when they are ready, the remembering process will be unique too.

It's interesting to me how we all experience grief differently and follow a journey to accepting death in unique and personal ways – in the eventual hope that we can celebrate lives well lived with a commemoration of some kind. And, when you look across the globe, this is done in diverse ways.

In the UK, and other parts of the world where Christianity is followed, you'll find All Saints' Day marked immediately after All Hallows' Eve (Hallowe'en). These days are set aside in the calendar to remember the dead, the souls of faithful Christians.

In Mexico, and some other countries, the equivalent of All Saints' Day is observed as Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead). It's a joyful celebration because it's believed that mourning or sadness would offend the dead.

In Cambodia, Pchum Ben lasts for 15 days. People gather and fill the temples with offerings of food and drink to ease the suffering of the dead. It's a very important festival in Khmer culture.

There is a Hindu tradition that also lasts 15 days called Pitru Paksha (Fortnight of the Ancestors), when people remember their ancestors. The festival includes several ceremonies, performed so the departed souls can find peace.

In Japan, the Bon (or Obon) Festival lasts three days and commemorates ancestors, too. It's not a solemn occasion – rather, feasts and fireworks, games and dancing, including a dance to welcome the spirits of the dead, are held.

And, in China, they have the Hungry Ghost Festival, where spirits are believed to leave the underworld and wander the living world. Many people set an extra seat at their table for the dead. At the end of the month-long festival, people light lanterns and place them on lakes or rivers to lead spirits back to the lower realms.

Indeed, there are as many ways to honour the dead as there are different people and different cultures – it is death that we share, that we have in common.

I've found in-memory giving – with tools such as JustGiving and tribute funds, in our very virtual age – incredibly beneficial when it comes to remembering a life. You may think I'm biased, but I can't think of a better way to continue a person's legacy

than to fundraise for a cause that was important to them.

It can be comforting to know that each donation given in their memory helps to ensure other people's lives can be well lived too. There are many ways you can fundraise in memory of someone, from sponsored challenges and community events to tribute funds and online donations. Even a humble collection envelope can go a long way towards whatever occasion you'd like to raise money for.

When you feel ready, we're here to support you. You can find more information on commemorative giving at independentage.org/donate-in-memory, or from me at sophie.brown@independentage.org or on 020 7605 4223. ■

“*We follow a journey to accepting death in unique and personal ways.*

Your views heard

Your answers to our annual survey are in

Loneliness and isolation are among the issues that matter most to you – and you feel appreciated and valued in helping us tackle them.

Thank you to everyone who responded to our annual survey in January this year. We asked several questions, including why you first started to support us and how you feel about the communications you receive.

Your answers told us that many of you started to support Independent Age when you understood that older people want to maintain their independence and that loneliness is a problem in older age. For others, your support started when we helped a member of your family, or even when you received advice and support yourself.

Asked about the communications you receive from us, 88% of you said you feel appreciated and valued and that we thank you properly for your support. Some 89% feel well informed and updated about our work, and

84% understand the breadth of the work we do. More than 78% of you agree that our communications are enjoyable, informative and interesting, and cover a range of important issues facing older people.

We also asked what you thought were the biggest issues facing older people right now. Your responses were split evenly between the issues we suggested, but loneliness and isolation came in at the top at 11% and 10% of you respectively. Housing and discrimination, while important, came in at the bottom, at 3% and 4% respectively.

Your responses are helping us to understand what interests you and what you feel is important about the work we do – and that helps us to improve our communications.

Once again, thank you so much for sharing your views. ■



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Of the biggest issues facing older people right now, loneliness and isolation came in at the top.

£1 could turn into £20,000 every Friday!

Having a little flutter in the **Friday Flutter Independent Age Lottery can be incredibly rewarding.**

Not only could you win up to **£20,000** every Friday, you'll also be helping to transform the lives of older people across the UK.

It's definitely worth a flutter!

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if you match 6 numbers

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 **Independent Age**

 **Friday Flutter**
Independent Age Lottery



Give the gift of independence

Looking for a different kind of gift for someone you know?

A Gift of Independence is just the thing! You don't have to wrap it. It doesn't cost the earth. And whichever meaningful gift you choose, it will help an older person to hold on to their independence.



Visit independentage.org/support-us/gifts-of-independence to give the gift of independence to an older person.

independentage.org

Registered charity number 210729 (England and Wales), SC047184 (Scotland).

Gifts start from just
£5