



March 2022

# Support Matters

from Independent Age



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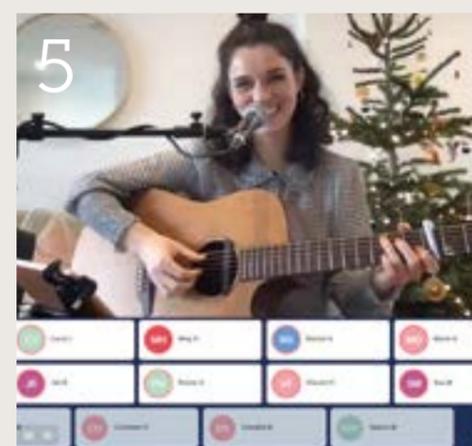
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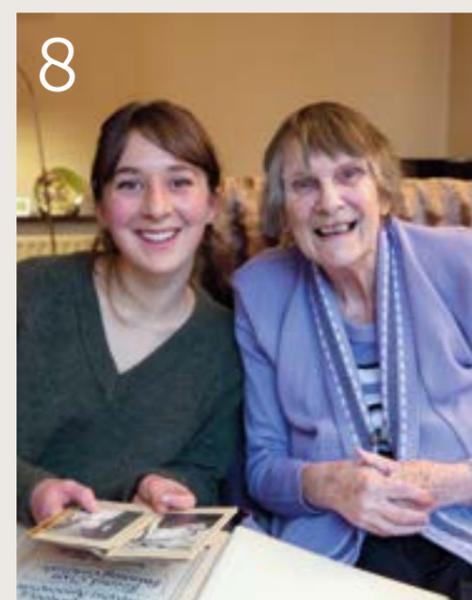
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# Welcome

*Spring this year, with its warmer weather and sunshine, also comes with the hope of a little more life and a little less isolation.*

In your work volunteering, you give hope of a good life to older people up and down the UK every day. You help to reconnect people to their communities, and the interests and activities they enjoy. That's enriching for us all.

On page 6, we have a wonderful story of that very thing: the extraordinary reaction to Edna Clayton's 101st birthday shows there's always life to be lived, whatever your age. Feeling uplifted is also the theme of Judy and Imogen's story on page 8, whose connection defies their different eras. Becky's heroic fundraising efforts put her new-found love of running to the test on page 4 and, if music is your thing, our ingenious live music gig shows how staying involved with things you love is always possible – see page 5.

Whatever troubles we face, there is always room for optimism. And it's people – friends, family, neighbours, community, whoever we have near – who, in my experience at least, reliably make the difference. You, our supporters, are a vital part of that.

**Stuart Rogers**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Tell us your story

As we grow older, bereavement, loneliness, accessing health and care, and rising living costs can affect everyone.

No story is too great or too small. We love to hear about memorable moments, life-changing conversations and actions that got you to where you are today.

If you have something to share, email us at [studio@independentage.org](mailto:studio@independentage.org). We'd love to hear from you!



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*Almost 8,500 people signed our open letter to help fix bereavement support, which we delivered to the Department of Health and Social Care, celebrates **Amaani Khan**, Campaigns and Public Affairs Assistant.*

“

*Our open letter received an amazing 8,467 signatures.*

We know that people aged 65 and over experience bereavement more than other age groups – but are less likely to seek help. And, after hearing from our supporters about their experiences during the pandemic, we know that emotional support following a bereavement is more important than ever. So, in May 2021, we launched our Time to grieve campaign.

Whether it's information and advice, counselling, support groups or online forums, we want to see support available to those who need it.

To support the campaign, we launched an open letter calling on the government to fix bereavement support. After months of campaigning and tremendous support from our campaigners, our open letter received an amazing 8,467 signatures.

In November 2021 we went to the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), accompanied by four keen supporters, and handed the

letter directly to the minister, Gillian Keegan. It's thanks to the number of signatures, and the campaigners who came with us to the DHSC, that the minister met with us.

Our campaigners shared with her their personal experiences of bereavement and how important it is to have a range of support services available.

Julie, one of our campaigners who joined us on the day, said: "We spoke about our experiences of losing loved ones with the minister. She listened carefully to us and spoke with understanding about how bereavement can affect all of us in different ways and at different times."

We continue to campaign on this important topic, and our progress so far wouldn't have been possible without our brilliant campaigners. We thank you.

Find out more about our campaigning work, or sign up to campaign with us, at [independentage.org/campaigning](https://independentage.org/campaigning). ■

## Support when you need it most

You're helping to fix bereavement support



## Mike's story

Mike and Inez, who was originally from Sweden, were married for 55 years before she died from an inoperable brain tumour in 2016.

Inez died 12 weeks after being diagnosed and her death came as a terrible shock to Mike. He openly admits that it was one of the hardest moments of his life: "After losing Inez, I felt completely alone."

Mike reached out for support and came across Independent Age, through which he now has a visitor every week and a telephone friend to talk to every Tuesday evening.

"I felt terribly lonely after Inez passed but both Elaine and Joanne have given me a new lease of life. We've become real friends now. We talk about all sorts of things."

Mike worked as a national sales manager, running his own business travelling the UK, before deciding to retire aged 68.

But, he says, "I got bored very quickly. So, one day, my niece rang me up. She worked for an estate agent and asked if I could do some of the viewings for her. I did that for another seven years because I loved it so much!"

We've been helping Mike since January 2020. "Independent Age's services are very well put together. I can't thank them enough for what they have done for me.

"I was left on my own and it was only thanks to Independent Age, and having someone to talk to, that I was able to have some form of companionship again." ■

# Up and running

Fundraising can inspire big goals

*When Becky decided to raise money to help Independent Age tackle loneliness, only running her first marathon would do.*

Click! That's the sharp ringing sound of coins dropping into the glass fundraising jar that Becky Hume has put on the counter of the fish and chip shop she manages in Falmouth.

"The customers have been very supportive of my journey, and regularly add to the jar!" she says.

Becky, 25, took on the iconic London Marathon in October 2021 to raise funds for Independent Age.

Not only was it her first marathon, but Becky also says she's never been a runner.

"I took part in the Plymouth half marathon in September – my first running event – and loved every second of it. I felt ready for the physical and mental challenge of a marathon."

Becky donates to Independent Age each month and used the marathon to raise more than £1,500 for us.

"Older people deserve care and support. I learnt about the amazing work of Independent Age through a friend. My nan lives by herself and is very independent, but I know she often goes days without speaking to anyone."

The London Marathon is the largest annual fundraising event in the world and, since it began in 1981, participants have raised more than £1 billion for good causes.

Becky says taking on the 26.2-mile challenge was "tough, but also an incredibly rewarding experience".

"Loneliness is a very important subject which I feel doesn't get spoken about enough – but it can severely affect a person of older age," says Becky.

"I want to help Independent Age because they do so much to tackle loneliness among older people." ■

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*The customers have been very supportive of my journey, and regularly add to the jar!*



## Hitting the right note

Festive friendship and music – by phone

*Our telephone groups rounded off the year in festive style with a live music gig, reports Rahma Ali, Virtual Events Coordinator.*

For people already experiencing loneliness and isolation, 2021 was another tough year. So, our Digital and Phone Services team continued to help older people across the UK connect with friends without leaving home.

Our telephone groups, made up of five or six older people, and led by our brilliant volunteer facilitators, brought community, fun, learning and advice straight into people's homes in a year when local, community connections were difficult to access.

To round off the year, we partnered for a second time with the charity Music in Hospital Care, offering our telephone group members the chance to phone in to a live festive gig.

It was our biggest-ever telephone group, with 17 older people joining the call from as far north as the Scottish Highlands to the very south of England and Wales. Everyone introduced themselves and marvelled at the far-reaching work of Independent Age.

Our musician Hattie played a mix of Christmas songs and took requests for the music of an eclectic array of performers, including Rag n Bone Man, The Beatles, Etta James and Dean Martin.

During the short interval, we talked to Hattie about her passion for music, her father's professional career as a saxophonist, and why she loves performing to people who might not otherwise be able to get to gigs. We ended our session with David, one of our music group members, seizing the opportunity to give us a tune of his own.

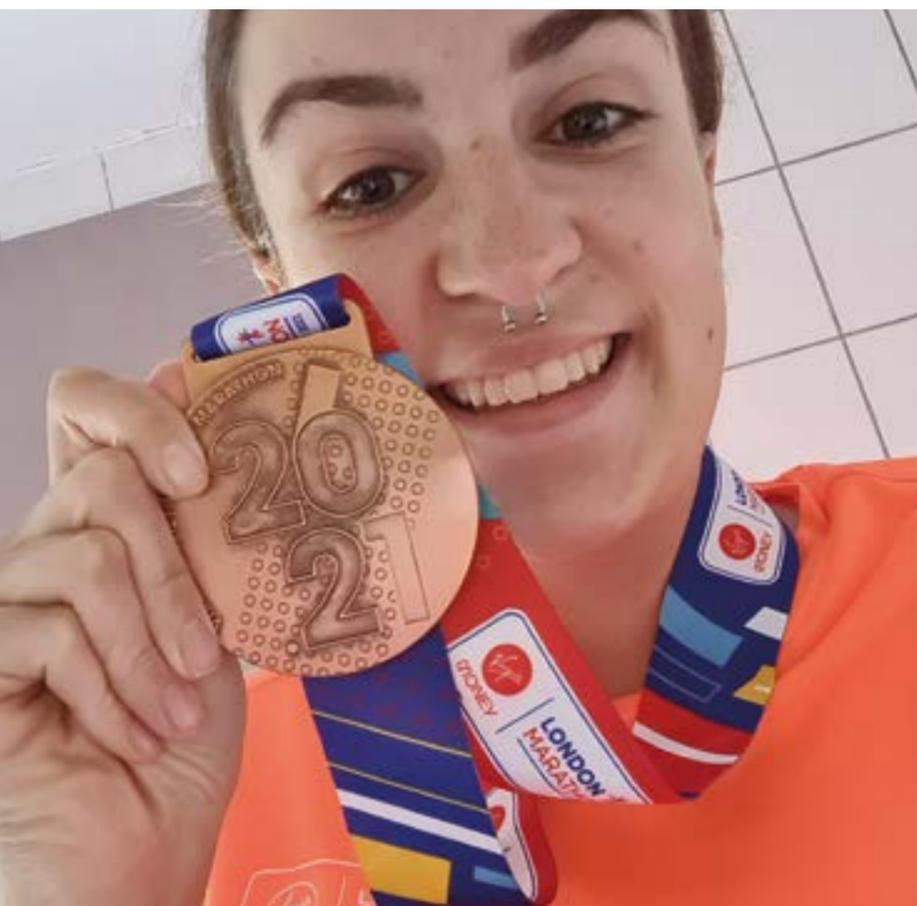
Our telephone group members agreed the session hit just the right note: "I really enjoyed it. You did a brilliant job hosting and coordinating that number of people. What you're doing is brilliant because so many people aren't online."

"I appreciate everything you do – it was very special to be together."

"I'm grateful for what you do, all the volunteers and staff. If Hattie was here now, I'd put my arms around her – what you all do, I wish everyone could have this. Everybody is going through a difficult time at the moment, and for one person to sing to us and make that time is lovely." ■

“

*It was our biggest-ever telephone group.*





# Talk of the town

A 101st birthday to remember

*A national appeal saw Edna Clayton celebrate a memorable birthday, says Shyam Matharu, Corporate Partnerships Manager.*

**E**dna Clayton celebrated her 101st birthday in style, receiving more birthday cards than she's ever known.

Moonpig, the online greeting card and gift business, released an exclusive, personalised birthday card for people to send to her in the run up to her birthday, with profits going to Independent Age.

This followed a national appeal from Glasgow care home Hector House, where staff discovered that Edna had spent her 100th birthday alone in lockdown, with no visitors or celebrations. They were determined that, this year, 31 January would be a birthday to remember for Edna.

Moonpig's card was created in Edna's honour, and thousands of people took the opportunity to wish her well. The £2,000 raised from sales of the card will be donated to Independent Age to help us continue to provide free support for older people, to help them live independently and to relieve loneliness in later life.

Moonpig also donated a gift basket, which was given to Edna in person by Claire Donaghy, Head of Scotland Services at Independent Age, during a special birthday visit to Hector House.

"It was an honour to meet Edna, Glasgow's newest celebrity, and wish her a happy birthday from everyone at Independent Age," said Claire.

"She is the talk of the town and it was lovely to see some of the thousands of cards that she has received from all around the world. She is an astonishing woman."

Catherine Carson, Card Planning Manager at Moonpig, said: "Our mission at Moonpig is to help people connect and create moments that matter, so when we heard about Edna's story, we knew we had to get involved."

"Chloe Allum, in our in-house team, designed this lovely card for Edna, with the hope that we can contribute to a more heartfelt celebration this year."

"By donating the profits from this card, we hope that Independent Age can make a difference in more people's lives so they don't have to be lonely on their birthday – or any day of the year."

Angela Todd, Manager at Hector House, explained how the unexpected birthday surprise had been received.

"Both myself and Edna have been overwhelmed by the response. Edna has been so touched and this has made her so, so happy."

"We would like to thank each and every person who has reached out to her and made this very special lady so happy. She deserves everything coming her way as she has spent her life putting everyone else first."

Shyam Matharu, Corporate Partnerships Manager at Independent Age, also sent the charity's best wishes.

"Everyone at Independent Age would like to wish Edna a very happy

101st birthday. The pandemic has isolated people and made it harder for loved ones to get together for important events. Sadly, even as we emerge from the latest restrictions, we know many older people across the country will still spend their birthday alone, but the money raised through these cards could enable us to support those in later life experiencing loneliness.

"We must continue working with caring businesses like Moonpig that can help us raise awareness of and funding for our work."

If you or someone you know works for a company that runs a charity donation or partnership scheme, please nominate Independent Age – and don't forget to tell us about your nomination by emailing me at [shyam.matharu@independentage.org](mailto:shyam.matharu@independentage.org). ■

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*Staff were determined that, this year, 31 January would be a birthday to remember for Edna.*

# You make me feel so young

Just talking brings back youth and memories

*Two women of different eras find happiness and uplift in their weekly chat.*

Genuine interest in how each other has lived – and lives – is at the heart of why Judy and Imogen's friendship has blossomed.

**Judy** "It was after my husband died that I started to feel lonely. Howard and I met on a blind date when I was 18 – I can still remember it clearly, even though I'm now 84.

"We married when I was 20 and had a lovely life. We were very sociable people. We were the ones who gave the parties. Our home was always full of life.

"Howard died 17 years ago. It had just been the two of us – and then there was just me.

"I very rarely go out now. I have osteoarthritis and I'm in pain a lot. There are days when I don't speak to anyone at all or even see another face.

"When I saw an advertisement for Independent Age I decided to get in touch. I felt I wanted to speak to someone. I have so many stories to tell.

"Imogen and I talk every Sunday for at least half an hour. It's lovely that a young person is interested in an old person like me. In my head I'm still 21.

"She's so interested in my past – about when I lived in Australia, and about the war. I grew up in London and we left just two days before our house was bombed and our neighbours were killed. I still feel lucky to be alive.

"I say to Imogen, 'I'm sorry I keep on talking,' and she tells me, 'I like hearing about you, that's why I ring you'.

"I think it absolutely beautiful for a young person to volunteer.

I really appreciate it and I'm grateful to Independent Age for organising it. Maybe it makes me feel younger talking to someone young. It brings back all the memories."

**Imogen** "Judy and I just clicked from the beginning. I'm 24 and she's 84, but it's like speaking to a friend.

"We've been chatting for about 18 months now. I genuinely enjoy speaking to people who are older, getting a completely different perspective from a different generation. I've always found it interesting to hear about how life used to be, and I get wisdom and comfort from speaking to people who've lived for so much longer than me.

"I've always been concerned about people who are lonely. I was looking for a charity that focused on loneliness when I came across Independent Age.

"Judy and I chat every week and it's uplifting for both of us. Judy talks about her past and the travelling she's done, the war, historical events, the outfits she would have worn at different times. It's another world to me but so enriching.

"I share stories with her about the places I've been to, and I talk a little about my boyfriend and my job – I'm a primary school teacher. We chat about anything funny or interesting that's happened.

"I've learnt things from her. I live in the countryside in Cornwall and don't know London well. It's been interesting to hear what it was like there during her childhood.

"By the end of the conversation we're always laughing and having fun. I feel better after a call with Judy and uplifted in the same way I do if I catch up with any friend.

"Volunteering for Independent Age is so rewarding. It enriches your life, and you find out about a whole other world. It gives you a lovely feeling to think you're making a difference to someone else." ■



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

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A WEEK

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**£1,000**  
if you match 5 numbers

1st Prize:  
**£20,000**  
if you match 6 numbers

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**£25**  
M&S voucher

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!**

Play now at  
**[independentage.weeklylottery.org.uk](https://independentage.weeklylottery.org.uk)**  
or call our Lottery Helpline on **0330 002 0057**

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Independent Age



# Independent Age



## Looking for a challenge in 2022?

**Whether you're just starting out or a seasoned marathon runner, you can help fundraise for Independent Age!**

Take part in the Royal Parks Half Marathon and run through four of London's eight Royal Parks, join 2,500 adventurers in the Peak District National Park, or join one of our many other challenges.

You'll help us to raise vital funds for older people in the UK, and support the great work we do every day.

Visit us and register today at [independentage.org/support-us/join-an-event](https://independentage.org/support-us/join-an-event).

**#TeamIA**