

Staying safe

Personal security at home
or out and about

Home
& care



***Age UK is the new force combining
Age Concern and Help the Aged.***

***With almost 120 years of combined
history to draw on, we are bringing
together our talents, services
and solutions to do more to enrich
the lives of people in later life.***

***The Age UK family includes Age Cymru,
Age NI and Age Scotland. There are
also more than 150 local Age UKs.***

This information guide has been prepared by Age UK and contains general advice only, which we hope will be useful. Nothing in this guide should be construed as specific advice and it should not be relied on as a basis for any decision or action. The Age UK Group does not accept any liability arising from its use. We aim to ensure that this information is as up to date and accurate as possible, but please be warned that certain areas are subject to change from time to time. Please note that the inclusion of named agencies, companies, products, services or publications in this information guide does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by the Age UK Group. This guide was printed in April 2010 and updated in June 2011. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this guide is correct. However, things do change, so it is always a good idea to seek expert advice on your personal situation.

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Age UK is the new force combining

AGE
Concern

and

HELPTHEAGED WE WILL



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Introduction

Many of us are anxious about crime. But research shows that people aged over 60 are less likely to be attacked or robbed than people in any other age group.

Taking a few simple precautions can also help us to avoid being targeted. This guide outlines steps we can take to make us feel more secure both at home and when we're out.

Throughout this guide you will find suggestions for organisations that can give further information and advice about your options. Their contact details can be found in the 'Useful organisations' section (see pages 22 to 26). Contact details for local organisations can usually be found in your local phone book. If you have difficulty finding them, your local Age UK/AgeConcern* should be able to help (see page 22).

As far as possible, the information in this guide is applicable across the UK.

Key



This symbol indicates where information differs for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.



This symbol indicates who to contact for the next steps you need to take.

*Many of our local partners will remain Age Concern for a while yet.

Securing your doors

You can reduce the risk of your home being burgled by taking some simple, and often inexpensive, precautions.

Two-thirds of burglars gain entry through a door. So if your front and back doors are not secure, neither is your home. To be secure, your front door should have a strong frame, good locks, a door viewer or peephole and a security chain.

Ideally, a front door should be fitted with:

- a five-lever mortice deadlock with kitemark BS 3621. These locks can only be unlocked with a key, even from the inside
- an automatic rim latch lock, sometimes called a nightlatch. These locks can usually be opened from the inside without a key. Some have an inside handle which can also be locked with a key for extra security
- a letter box cage to prevent thieves from tampering with locks through the letter box.

Your back door should be fitted with a five-lever mortice deadlock. If you have french doors, perhaps into your garden, you should fit a security mortice lock and mortice bolt to both sides, and get advice on fitting locks to patio doors.

Make sure that the doors and frames of all outside doors are strong and in good condition with sturdy door hinges. Hinge bolts can be fitted for extra security. And if you have any doors with glass panels near the locks, consider replacing them with laminated glass, or buy special film to stick to the inside that will have the same effect.

Securing your windows

A third of burglars get in through a window, but closed windows fitted with window locks are an effective deterrent.

You should fit window locks with keys to all downstairs windows and to those that are easy to reach, such as those above a flat roof or near a drain pipe. Remember to remove the keys from locked windows and keep them in a safe place, out of sight and reach. They should be close to the window so you can find them easily, but not on the windowsill.

If you are thinking of buying PVCu or metal-framed windows, make sure that they come with good built-in locks and comply to British security standards, as it may not be possible to fit better locks once they are installed.

what next?

It is best to get locks and bolts fitted by a qualified locksmith. Check whether they are a member of the Master Locksmiths Association (page 25).

Security devices

In addition to locks, there are other, more sophisticated, security devices available, such as burglar alarms and special outdoor lighting.

Outdoor lights are particularly useful as they not only act as a deterrent, but they also make it much easier for you if you're coming or going after dark. You can get a low-level light that stays on throughout the night or a light that switches on automatically when someone walks up the path. Or you may prefer a light that uses timer switches that you can programme to go on and off at particular times.

If you are thinking about installing a burglar alarm, you should do the following.

- Ask the Crime Prevention Officer at your local police station for advice.
- Get at least three quotes and specialist advice from alarm companies.
- Ask your insurance company which alarm companies it recommends.
- Get professional help to install the alarm.

There are schemes all over the UK offering home security services. Age UK also offers a HandyVan service in selected areas of the UK. They can give advice on making your home safer and do small repairs. To find out whether the service operates in your area, call 0845 026 1055.

what next?

You can also contact your local Crime Prevention Officer, a local Age UK, your local council or Safe Partnership (see page 26) for more information on safety services in your area.

Locking up

Many burglaries are carried out by opportunist thieves who get into your home through an open or unsecured door or window.

There are a few simple precautions you can take to help avoid this.

- Be sure to lock all the outside doors and check that all the windows are locked. Many burglaries happen during the afternoon, so even if you are just popping out for a few minutes always lock up fully before you go. But when you lock up while you're inside, such as at night, keep your keys nearby so you can easily escape in an emergency.
- Keep your ladder and garden tools locked away.
- Always keep your keys in a safe place, including your car keys. The first places that a burglar will look for your door key are under the doormat, in a flower-pot or on a piece of string through the letter-box. Never leave any keys in the locks or lying around the house.
- Keep valuables out of sight.
- If you are out for the evening, leave a front room light on (not the hall) and perhaps put the radio on too. Draw the curtains, leaving a small gap at the top so that the light can be seen from outside. An opportunist thief may think that there is someone in the house and be put off.

Outside your home

Don't forget to secure any garages, sheds and passageways outside your home.

- Keep garage windows and doors locked, particularly if your garage is attached to your house with a door leading to the inside.
- Make sure that thieves cannot get into your garden by putting up a good fence and padlocking the side gate, which should be strong enough to withstand a good kick.
- Garages and sheds are often full of expensive tools, some of which a burglar could also use to break into your house. So make sure that garage doors are solid and fitted with strong locks.
- Fix trellising to the top of any solid fences or walls to make it harder for burglars to climb over.
- Fit a strong, high, lockable gate to any passageways at the side and back of your home. If you share a passageway with a neighbour, ask for their permission and for help with the costs. However, if the passage is a right of way then you will need special permission from your local authority or the courts.

Shared entrances

If you have a shared entrance, never buzz someone in without checking who they are. Never let strangers in. Shared entrance doors should only have locks with kitemark BS 8621. These locks don't need keys to be opened from the inside, which means you can get out of the building quickly if there is a fire.

‘Locking up all my doors and windows is part of my routine now. Even if I’m just going out for a few minutes, I make sure my home isn’t open to burglars.’



Insurance

Good insurance cover will ease the financial worry of replacing stolen items. Many insurance companies offer reduced premiums for people with good home security and to members of Neighbourhood Watch schemes. Compare insurance quotes from different companies by using a price comparison website to make sure that you get the best deal for your circumstances, but be aware that not all companies advertise their products on comparison websites. Some companies tailor their products for people in later life. If you're not on the internet, ask friends or family to help you check – they might find that they can make some savings themselves!

In addition, the Age UK Group offers an insurance scheme through Ageas Insurance, specifically for older people. Call Ageas Insurance on 0845 602 9166* for more information.

Marking possessions

Your valuables are more likely to be found by the police if you mark your property with your postcode and the number of your house or flat, or the first two letters of its name. You should also take pictures of valuable items and write down the serial numbers of any electrical equipment to help police return stolen property to you if it is recovered.

what next?

Ask your local Crime Prevention Officer or Neighbourhood Watch group to help you find someone to mark your property. This can be done by etching or die-stamping to deter burglars as it makes your property harder to sell. If you cannot use these methods, write on the items with a security marker that can only be read under an ultra-violet light.

*If you call the 0845 number above, you will be dealing with Ageas Insurance Limited, which provides and manages these insurances. Registered address: Ageas House, Tollgate, Eastleigh SO53 3YA, England. Registered number 354568.

Going on holiday

To a burglar, a dozen milk bottles on the doorstep or a newspaper sticking out of the letter-box is an invitation to break in. A few simple steps can keep your home safe while you are away.

- Cancel milk, newspapers and other deliveries.
- If you have a garden, mow your lawn before you travel.
- Don't close curtains or blinds as they are a giveaway during the day.
- Plug a lamp into a time switch that will automatically turn it on in the evenings while you're away. However, don't leave it in a room which passers-by can see into when the light is on.
- Ask a friend or neighbour to keep an eye on your home for you, and perhaps collect your post, draw your curtains, mow your lawn and switch lights on and off.
- Check that your building and contents insurance is up to date.
- When you travel, remember not to display your home address on the outside of your luggage.

Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbourhood Watch schemes are self-help groups that work in partnership with the police, local councils and other agencies involved in community safety to prevent crime. They can offer valuable neighbourly help and advice.

**what
next?**

Ask your local Crime Prevention Officer if there is a scheme in your area. If there isn't, why not help to set one up? You can also look online for your nearest Neighbourhood Watch scheme: www.ourwatch.org.uk

Bogus callers

People who call at your home may well be genuine. But it is a good idea to take precautions when answering the door to people you don't know.

Bogus callers are people who use various stories to get into your home so they can steal from you or trick you out of money. They may pose as staff from the council or a gas, water or electricity company, or even the police. Some may present themselves as an ordinary person in need of help; for example, they could ask to use your phone in an emergency.

Rogue traders

Doorstep traders are not always genuine or honest salespeople. Rogue traders may try to push you into agreeing to unnecessary home repairs or improvements, often at extortionate prices.

It can be difficult to get rid of doorstep traders unless you agree to sign up for whatever they are selling. But it's your doorstep and you are in control. Don't be afraid to say no. Don't agree to anything, sign a contract or pay money until you have talked to someone else, and never let anyone persuade you to go to your bank and withdraw cash for a payment.

Above all, don't be afraid to ask a salesperson to leave. If they refuse, call the police.

**what
next?**

For more information on scams and rogue traders, see our free guide *Avoiding scams*.

Safety at the door

You don't need to feel embarrassed about refusing to let someone in. Only let someone in when you are absolutely sure that they are genuine. Before you open your door, remember:

- **Lock** – Lock all your other outer doors before you go to the front door. Some burglars work together – one keeps you chatting on the doorstep while another gets in through a back door.
- **Stop** – Think about whether you are expecting anyone.
- **Chain** – Put the door chain on (don't keep the chain on all the time as it will prevent anyone with a key from entering, such as a home help). Look through the window or spy-hole to see who is there.
- **Check** – Ask for an identity card and examine it carefully. Check who they are by phoning the company they represent – get the number from a bill or your phone book rather than calling a number they give you, which may be that of an accomplice.

You can always ask the caller to come back another time when someone will be with you, or tell them to write to you to arrange a more convenient time to visit. It is particularly important to do this if there is more than one person on your doorstep. A genuine caller won't mind you taking these precautions.

Remember: if in doubt, keep them out. If you are still suspicious, dial 999 and ask for the police.

Password schemes

Gas, electricity and water companies are all required to offer special services to customers of pension age or to people who are disabled. This includes a doorstep password scheme, where you can arrange a password with the company to check that their representatives are genuine.

There are other ways to feel safer when an unexpected caller is at your door. Some areas have nominated neighbour schemes whereby you can hold up to a nearby window a yellow card that tells a caller to go to a neighbour's house. Your neighbour will check their identity for you and, if the caller is genuine, your neighbour will come back to your house with them and wait while the caller carries out their business. Contact your local Neighbourhood Watch or Crime Prevention Officer for more information.

what next?

If you haven't already done so, set up a password with your utility companies and ask what other special services they offer.

‘I feel less vulnerable now. My home finally feels safe and I can relax and enjoy living here again.’

Teresa contacted Age UK when several houses in her neighbourhood were burgled.

‘When I read about the break-ins in my local paper, I was so worried that I would be next. I live on my own and couldn’t sleep at night, because every time I heard a noise outside I thought someone was trying to get in.

‘I mentioned this to my neighbour and she suggested I ask my local Age UK about its handyman service. I rang up and told them my concerns, and they sent someone round to help.

‘The handyman walked around my home with me and explained how I could make it more secure, and fitted a door chain and window locks. And my neighbour gave me her telephone number so I can always call her for help if a stranger comes to the door.

‘I feel less vulnerable now. My home finally feels safe and I can relax and enjoy living here again.’





Utility company contacts table

Write down the phone numbers of your local services in the space below so that they are handy if you need to check the identity of a doorstep caller:

Electricity:

.....

Gas:

.....

Water:

.....

Telephone:

.....

Local social services department:

.....

Local council:

.....

Local police station:

.....

If you are suspicious, dial 999 and ask for the police.

Safety on the street

Crimes in public places are very rare, but many of us worry about them. The following tips will help you to feel and stay safe.

- Plan your route before you go and stick to busy, well-lit areas.
- Spread your money and valuables around your body. For example, keep your keys in your coat pocket and your money in a closely carried bag.
- Keep valuables out of sight.
- Don't carry large sums of money. If your pension is paid straight into your bank or Post Office Card Account, you don't have to draw it all out in one go.

- Before you use a cash machine, check that there is no-one hovering about. Always safeguard your Personal Identification Number (PIN). Don't count your money in the middle of the street.
- If you use a wheelchair, keep your belongings beside you rather than hanging them on the back of the chair.
- If you think you are being followed, keep moving and head for a busy area; tell someone what is happening or call the police.
- Keep your handbag in sight all the time, not slung on your back like a rucksack.
- Shout loudly to get attention in an emergency.
- Consider carrying a personal alarm. If you use a mobile phone have your useful numbers programmed and ready to use, but keep it out of sight.
- If someone tries to snatch your bag it may be best to let them take it.

Safety on public transport

- Try to wait for public transport in busy, well-lit areas.
- You may feel safer if you sit near other people. If you are on the bus or train and there are not many people about, sit near the driver. Try to be near the bell or emergency alarm.
- If someone makes you feel uncomfortable, move away.

Safety in taxis

- Keep the number of a reliable licensed taxi company handy. Find a company you trust and feel comfortable with and use them each time.
- Book a taxi before you go out. When it arrives, check it is the one you ordered before you get in. If you're in any doubt ask the driver to tell you the name of the person who booked the taxi but don't tell them your name.
- Sit behind the driver on the back seat and if you feel uneasy, ask to be dropped off somewhere you know that is busy and well-lit.

Safety when driving

- Before setting off, plan your route and make sure that you have enough petrol. Tell someone where you are going and how long you expect the journey to take.
- Think about what you would do if you broke down. For example, do you carry a mobile phone to use in an emergency? If it is cold, it is a good idea to have a blanket and some warm clothes in case you have to wait for help to come.
- Try to park in busy, well-lit areas. If you park in the daytime, think about what the area will be like after dark.
- Keep valuables and personal possessions out of sight and doors locked. When you leave the car, make sure that you remove any valuables and lock the doors.

what next?

Consider joining a roadside assistance scheme for extra peace of mind should you break down. Prices vary, so shop around to find the best deal. Age UK offers a scheme through Ageas Insurance. Contact Ageas Insurance on 0845 602 9118* to find out more.

Mobile phones

It is worth taking steps to prevent mobile phone theft.

- Record your registration number (IMEI) and your phone number. You can get your IMEI number (15-digit serial number) by keying *#06# into most phones or by looking behind the phone battery. Store the numbers in a safe place so that you can give the details to your network and the police if your phone is stolen.
- Avoid using your phone in crowded places where you feel unsafe; do not leave it unattended.
- If your phone is stolen, report it to your network and the police as soon as possible so that it can be cancelled.

What to do if you are a victim of crime

Good home security and being careful when you're out will reduce the chance of becoming a victim of crime. But should the worst happen, there are steps you can take to get help and make yourself safe.

- Call the police as soon as you can.
- If you think you have been burgled when you get home, do not go inside unless you are sure that the intruder has gone. Call the police straight away.

*If you call the 0845 number above, you will be dealing with Ageas Insurance Limited, which provides and manages these insurances. Registered address: Ageas House, Tollgate, Eastleigh SO53 3YA, England. Registered number 354568.

- After the police have gone, make a list of missing items and contact your insurance company. If you are asked for the crime reference number, you should be able to get it from the police the following day.
- If you are robbed in the street, try to remember as much about it as you can: for example, what the thief looked like. Take the contact details of any witnesses.
- Change your locks if any keys have been taken.
- Cancel any stolen bank cards – the phone number should be on your bank statement or your bank's cash point.

Victim Support

Being burgled or robbed can be an upsetting experience. Victim Support gives free practical help and emotional support to people who have experienced crime, whether or not you report it to the police. It also runs a Witness Service to help people who are going to court.

what next?

You can call the Victim Supportline on 0845 30 30 900 or get in touch with your local branch.

Compensation schemes

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) compensates victims of crime who have been injured or traumatised. It does not provide compensation to replace stolen or damaged possessions.

what next?



You can find out more about how to claim by contacting CICA (see page 23). In Northern Ireland, contact the Compensation Agency (see page 23). Your local Victim Support or Citizens Advice Bureau may be able to help you with your application.

Security checklist

- Keep all windows and doors locked and bolted (where possible) while you are out.
 - When you lock up at night, keep the keys to hand so that you can get out easily if you need to.
 - Keep your keys in a safe place and out of sight.
 - If you have one, set your burglar alarm every time you go out.
 - Cancel milk and regular deliveries before going away.
 - Leave some lights on when you go out at night.
 - Don't keep large amounts of cash at home, or leave bank statements lying around.
 - When answering the door remember to:
lock, stop, chain, check.
 - Never let a stranger into your home unless you are confident that they are genuine. If in doubt, keep them out.
 - Take a few safety precautions when you are out.
 - Speak to your local Crime Prevention Officer or Neighbourhood Watch group about any worries.
- Remember: crimes against older people are rare.

Useful organisations

Age UK

Age UK is the new force combining Age Concern and Help the Aged. We provide advice and information for people in later life through our Age UK Advice line, publications and online.

Age UK Advice: 0800 169 65 65
www.ageuk.org.uk

In Wales, contact
Age Cymru: 0800 169 65 65
www.agecymru.org.uk

In Northern Ireland, contact
Age NI: 0808 808 7575
www.ageni.org

In Scotland, contact
Age Scotland: 0845 125 9732
www.agescotland.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

A national network of advice centres offering free, confidential and independent advice face-to-face. Your local CAB may also be able to give advice by email or telephone.

To find details of your nearest CAB in:

England or Wales, go to www.citizensadvice.org.uk
Northern Ireland, go to www.citizensadvice.co.uk
Scotland, go to www.cas.org.uk

CAB provides information on the law and your rights at www.adviceguide.org.uk

Compensation Agency

Supports the victims of violent crime in Northern Ireland by providing compensation.

1st Floor
Royston House
34 Upper Queen Street
Belfast BT1 6FD

Tel: 028 9054 7417
www.compensationni.gov.uk

Crime Prevention Officer

Can give expert advice on making your home more secure, assess your needs for security devices and explain how to get hold of them. Contact the Crime Prevention Officer at your local police station for more information.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA)

Can compensate people who have been physically or mentally injured by a violent crime.

Tay House
300 Bath Street
Glasgow G2 4LN

Tel: 0800 358 3601 (free call from landlines)
www.cica.gov.uk

Home improvement agencies

Help older homeowners and private tenants to repair and improve their homes.

In England, contact:

Foundations
Bleaklow House
Howard Town Mill
Glossop
Derbyshire SK13 8HT

Tel: 0845 864 5210
www-foundations-uk-com

In Wales, contact Care and Repair Cymru:

Norbury House
Norbury Road
Fairwater
Cardiff CF5 3AS

Tel: 029 2057 6286
Tel: 0300 111 3333 (to find a local agency)
www-careandrepair-org-uk

In Northern Ireland, contact the Northern Ireland Housing Executive:

Tel: 03448 920 900 (national rate)
www-nihe-gov-uk

Home Office

Publishes three free booklets: *Be safe, be secure: your practical guide to crime reduction*; *How to beat the bogus caller* and *A guide to home security*. Call 0870 241 4680 for copies or download them from:

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications

Visit the Directgov website for statistics and information about crime prevention:

www.direct.gov.uk/crime

Master Locksmiths Association

The professional body of locksmiths. Produces a list of members, available free of charge from:

5d Great Central Way
Woodford Halse
Daventry
Northamptonshire NN11 3PZ

Tel: 0800 783 1498 (free call from landlines)
www.locksmiths.co.uk

Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbourhood Watch schemes are self-help groups that work in partnership with the police, local councils and other agencies involved in community safety to prevent crime. They can offer valuable neighbourly help and advice. You can also look online for your nearest Neighbourhood Watch scheme: www.ourwatch.org.uk

Safe Partnership

Provides free, practical and immediate home security to older people who have been burgled or are in fear of being burgled. To find out whether there is a local scheme, contact:

3 East Street
Wareham
Dorset BH20 4NN

Tel: 01929 551100
www.safepartnership.org

Suzy Lamplugh Trust

Charity that specialises in personal safety and produces a range of guides and personal safety products.

National Centre for Personal Safety
218 Strand
London WC2R 1AT

Tel: 020 7091 0014 (national call rate)
www.suzylamplugh.org

Victim Support

Charity that provides free and confidential help to victims and witnesses of crime.

Hallam House
56–60 Hallam Street
London W1W 6JL

Supportline: 0845 30 30 900 (lo-call rate)
www.victimsupport.org.uk

Can you help Age UK?

Please complete the donation form below with a gift of whatever you can afford and return to: Age UK, FREEPOST LON13041, PO Box 203, London N1 9BR. Alternatively, you can phone 0800 169 87 87 or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/donate. If you prefer, you can donate directly to one of our national or local partners. Thank you.

Personal details

Title:	Initials:	Surname:
Address:		
Postcode:		
Tel:	Email:	

By providing your email address and/or mobile number you are agreeing to us contacting you in these ways. You may contact us at any time to unsubscribe from our communications.

Your gift

I would like to make a gift of: £

I enclose a cheque/postal order made payable to Age UK

Card payment

I wish to pay by (please tick) MasterCard Visa CAF CharityCard
 Maestro American Express

(Maestro only)

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Signature X
Expiry date	<input type="text"/>	/	<input type="text"/>	Issue no. (Maestro only)	<input type="text"/>	

Gift Aid declaration

(please tick) Yes, I want Age UK and its partner organisations* to treat all donations I have made for the four years prior to this year, and all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise, as gift aid donations. I confirm I pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax that the charity will reclaim on my donations in the tax year. Date: ___/___/___ (please complete). *Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age NI



We will use the information you have supplied to communicate with you in line with Data Protection guidelines. Age UK (registered charity no 1128267) comprises the Charity, its group of companies and national partners (Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age NI). If you would prefer not to hear from them or carefully selected third parties, let us know by phoning 0800 107 8977.

You may be interested in other guides in this range

- *Adapting your home*
- *Advice for carers*
- *Care at home*
- *Care homes*
- *Care home checklist*
- *Home safety checker*
- *Housing options*
- *Personal budgets*
- *Retiring abroad*



To order any of our **free** publications please call Age UK Advice, free on:

0800 169 65 65

www.ageuk.org.uk/homeandcare

What should I do now?

For more information on the issues covered in this guide, or to order any of our publications, please call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65** or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/homeandcare

Our publications are also available in large print and audio formats.

The following Age UK information guides may be useful:

- *Avoiding scams*
- *Home safety checker*
- *Housing options*

The Age UK Group offers a wide range of products and services specially designed for people in later life. For more information, please call **0800 169 18 19**.

If contact details for your local Age UK/Age Concern* are not in the box below, call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65**.



*Many of our local partners will remain Age Concern for a while yet.

Age UK is a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England (registered charity number 1128267 and registered company number 6825798). The registered address is 207-221 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ. Age Concern England (registered charity number 261794) and Help the Aged (registered charity number 272786), and their trading and other associated companies merged on 1 April 2009. Together they have formed the Age UK Group, dedicated to improving the lives of people in later life. The three national Age Concerns in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have also merged with Help the Aged in these nations to form three registered charities: Age Scotland, Age NI and Age Cymru. ID10827 06/11