



## Age UK Somerset News

December 2025

**HELPING ALL  
OLDER PEOPLE  
IN OUR AREA  
TO LIVE THEIR  
BEST LIVES**

### Less than a week to go until our Christmas Carol Service!

We hope you can join us for our favourite event of the year at magnificent Wells Cathedral on  
Wednesday 10th December!

It is sure to be busy and will start at 11am sharp so please arrive early to get seated. You don't need to book in advance, just turn up to enjoy Christmas Carols, traditional readings and a performance by the 44 strong Taunton Deane Male Voice Choir!

The event is free but it costs a lot to put on, (we couldn't do it without the kind support of The Somerset Care Group), so if you are able please give generously when the collection plate comes round.



We are very grateful to the  
not-for-profit  
Somerset Care Group  
for kindly sponsoring this event.



## CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE

**Wednesday 10th December 2025, 11am**

**at the magnificent Wells Cathedral**

With traditional Readings, popular Christmas Carols and the powerful, moving & uplifting voices of the TAUNTON DEANE MALE VOICE CHOIR, we guarantee you'll leave with a warm festive glow!



We hope you can join us for our joyful celebration

**EVERYONE WELCOME! Just turn up, no booking necessary.**

**Entry is free but donations are very welcome.**

*For your comfort & to ensure we start on time you must let us know in advance if you have any accessibility or special seating needs or if you are bringing a group and need minibus parking.*

For more information

visit: [www.ageuksomerset.org.uk/christmascarolservice2025](http://www.ageuksomerset.org.uk/christmascarolservice2025)

call: 01823 345627 or email [communications@ageuksomerset.org.uk](mailto:communications@ageuksomerset.org.uk)

Registered Charity 1015900

**If you can't make it this  
year put next year's  
date in your diary now!**

**In 2026 our Christmas  
Carol Service for 2026  
will take place on  
9th December.**

[Click here for more info](#)

## Cost-of-living support available for Somerset residents this winter

Is the **cost** of  
**living** crisis  
affecting your  
**daily life?**

Do you need **help?**



Support is available in your local community.



Please scan QR code or visit:  
@ [www.somerset.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support)  
If you do not have access to the internet,  
phone: 13000 123 2224 and ask for  
'cost of living support'.



**A range of support is available to help  
Somerset residents struggling due to the  
cost-of-living crisis this winter.**

Somerset Council is again distributing funds from  
the Government and working in partnership with



local charities and community groups to offer a broad selection of essential free support measures for local people.

**View all the support available on Somerset Council's website**

**With support from the Household Support Fund, Age UK Somerset offers the following services for people over 60:**

- Free eligibility checks for [benefits](#) and, if eligible, volunteer support to help complete benefit claim forms. (Last year, this brought an additional £5m into the local economy through claimed benefits)
- A free [Information and Advice](#) service, accessible by phone, email, or in person via appointments at their Taunton office. The service covers a wide range of topics, including support with care, finances, activities in your local area, and guidance on accessing help from other organisations.
- A free [Chat and Map](#) service, offering a one-stop-shop approach to resolving issues that may affect an older person's quality of life. The service treats everyone as individuals and includes a home visit by a member of staff. Through a friendly chat, they will explore what challenges might be impacting daily life, such as rising bills, feelings of isolation, or difficulties coping at home. Whatever the issues, we will work hard to find solutions. These may involve connecting the client with other Age UK Somerset services, making referrals to external organisations, or providing tangible goods.
- A free [Wellbeing service](#) to help reduce loneliness and isolation, especially during the darker months. This includes the company of a friendly volunteer through programmes such as Friendly Phonecalls, Walk and Talk, or Wellbeing Friends.

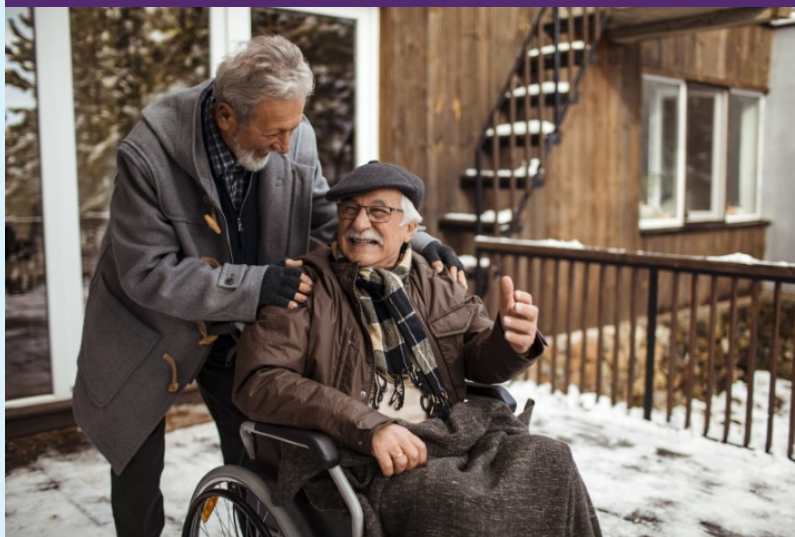
These services are proudly supported by Somerset Council via the Household Support Fund.

More information is available on our website

## Surviving Winter Grants

Once again this year, our **Information and Advice Team** will be working in partnership with the **Somerset Community Foundation** to distribute *Surviving Winter Grants* across the county.

**We are able to offer grants of up to £300 per household to older people who may be struggling to keep warm and well during the colder months.**



To be eligible, individuals should meet the following criteria:

- Be a **resident of Somerset** (excluding BANES and North Somerset)
- Be **aged over 60**
- Be **likely to struggle to maintain a reasonable standard of living** this winter
- Be **eligible for Pension Credit** (even if not currently claiming it)
- Have **any health conditions**
- Live in a **hard-to-heat home**

Our Information and Advice Officers hold the application forms and can send these to anyone



who meets the criteria.

If you know someone who could benefit from this support please do get in touch with the team - we'd be very happy to help.

**More info from the Somerset Community  
Foundation website**

## **Diving into Dreams: Age UK Somerset CEO Phil Dolan Earns Scuba Certification at 69**

**In a powerful reminder that age is no barrier to adventure, Phil Dolan, CEO of Age UK Somerset, has earned his PADI scuba diving accreditation just four months shy of his 70th birthday.**

Phil's journey began with a "try dive" in Cyprus last year, where he first experienced the magic of the underwater world. Inspired by the experience and driven by curiosity, he spent the winter completing his online theory training.

In October, he traveled to Kenya to finish his open water dives, officially becoming a certified scuba diver.

"I was taken with the fact that 70% of the world is underwater," Phil said. "If you want to see beyond the 30%, you've got to dive."





Phil's story is more than a personal triumph - it's a bold statement against ageism. As the head of an organisation dedicated to supporting older adults, he's proving first hand that later life can be a time of growth, exploration, and new beginnings.



**Philip Dolan**

BIRTHDATE

**[REDACTED] 1956**

[edit photo](#)

CERTIFICATION

**Scuba Diver**

See limitations

CERT. DATE

**26-October-2025**

PADI NO.

**[REDACTED]**

"Too often, society tells us to slow down as we age," Phil noted. "But I believe it's the perfect time to follow your dreams. Whether it's diving, painting, or learning a new language - **there's no expiry date on passion.**"

His accomplishment has already inspired colleagues and community members alike, with Age UK Somerset sharing his story to encourage others to challenge stereotypes and embrace life at every stage.

Phil's next goal? To keep diving and exploring the underwater world, one reef at a time.

## Congratulations to these "Age Friendly" local businesses



*Noah's Ark Zoo Farm accept their award from Kate Barrington of Age UK Somerset*

(c) Neil Warren

**Age UK Somerset was delighted to present Noah's Ark Zoo Farm with the Gold Award for being Age Friendly at the Bristol, Bath and Somerset Tourism awards held on November 20th.**

During a "Mystery" visit the judges were impressed not only with the facilities and services on offer but the warm and welcoming approach of Noah's Arks staff members.

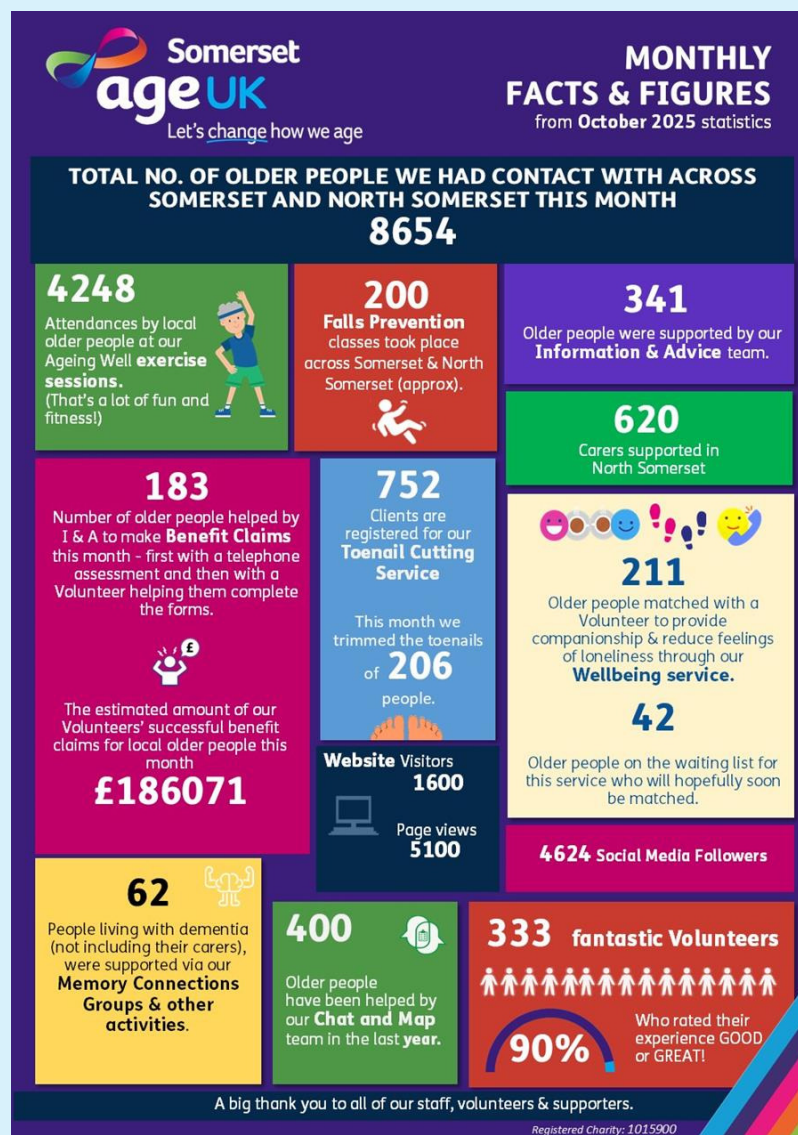
The Octagon Theatre and Westlands won the Silver Award.



Age UK Somerset been sponsoring this category since 2018 to recognise local cafes, hotels and attractions that go out of their way to make older visitors feel welcome, and to encourage other businesses to consider the needs of older clients and become more Age Friendly.

## Our Services

Here's how we've been helping older people in our area to live their best lives....



## How can we help you?

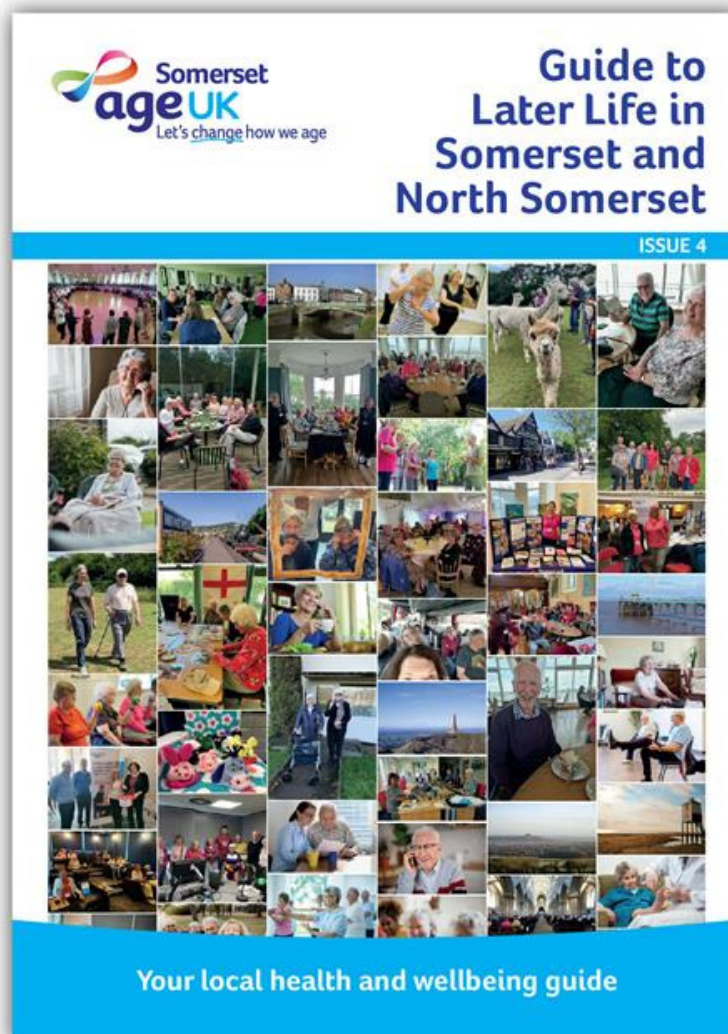
If you

- need help with claiming benefits,
- are looking for an activity to take part in,

- **are concerned about falls and want to improve your balance,**
- **want to have your toenails trimmed,**
- **have a question and need advice, or**
- **you could use some friendly company,**

**We are here to help.**

**Visit our Website to view our Services**



**View our Guide to Later Life in Somerset and North Somerset**

## **Falls Prevention**

Age UK Somerset has a dedicated Falls Prevention team because the effects of a fall on an older person can be devastating. Falls are a major cause of disability and the leading cause of mortality due to injury in older people aged over 75 in the UK.

Our '**Strong and Steady**' exercise programme is designed specifically to prevent falls, consisting of leg muscle strengthening and balance retraining exercises. These effective and sociable sessions take place across Somerset and North Somerset.



[Find a Strong and Steady session near you](#)

**New partnership working in the North of Somerset to reduce the risk of Falls**





Health and care partners from across Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire, including Age UK Somerset have launched a new comprehensive online resource aimed at preventing falls and supporting wellbeing.

The new web pages provide information about:

- Staying active, exercises, local groups and classes
- Looking after your health
- Staying safe at home
- Reducing your risk of falling.

Nadia Holland, Locality Development Manager at NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board, said: "We know that staying active is one of the most effective ways of preventing falls and keeping our body stronger and steadier. Regular movement also supports physical and mental wellbeing, and helps people stay independent for longer."

[Visit the Healthier Together website](#)

## **We have lots of other Exercise and Activity sessions to choose from**

### **If you are you looking for a New Year's Resolution we can help!**

We run over 80 exercise and activity sessions all across Somerset and North Somerset each week for older adults.

While these do offer an excellent way to increase or maintain your levels of fitness which is obviously a good thing, the added bonus is they are also very sociable offering a great opportunity to meet other people and have some fun!

Follow us on Facebook to hear about our  
new classes



**Act Now,**  
**Age Better.**

Find a session in your area





## Huge congratulations to the whole Information and Advice team!

### Celebrating Excellence in Advice!

We're proud to announce that our **Information & Advice (I&A) Team** has officially achieved the Quality of Advice Standard (QAS) - a national benchmark recognising excellence, accuracy, and impact in advice delivery.

This award reflects their dedication and consistently high-quality, person-centred support for older people across Somerset.

### We are delighted to announce that we have been awarded grants from the Somerset Community Foundation and Wessex Water Foundation Community Fund.

The grant from the Wessex Water Foundation will support our Chat and Map Service.

The Wessex Community Fund, part of the Wessex Water Foundation, supports community activities or projects or activities that meet a local need and seek to improve the lives of local people by bringing communities together and helping people take steps to build their financial capability across the Wessex Water region every year.





## The Age UK Somerset Singers

The Age UK Somerset singers had their first 'Xmas concert' for the Heather Club at the Sydenham Community Centre in Bridgwater - and it went down a treat!

Special thanks to Sue the Volunteer who runs this group.



[Learn more about The Age UK Somerset Singing group](#)

# Fundraising News

## **Tee-riffic Support! Cricket St Thomas Golfers Putt £8,000 towards supporting local Older People**



Cricket St Thomas Golf Club's Keith Hunt, has brought in an astonishing £8,000 for Age UK Somerset during his tenure as Senior's Captain and through a year of dedicated fundraising at the club.

From a buzzing Charity Golf Day in July, complete with donated raffle prizes and 4 Ball voucher auctions, to months of raffles, hole sponsorship and generous member donations, Keith inspired the Seniors Section to get behind us, his chosen charity. Many members rallied round, donated prizes, gathered sponsorship, ran activities on the day and kept everything running smoothly behind the scenes. Our heartfelt thanks go to them for their collective efforts, enthusiasm and kindness that made this brilliant total possible. We are incredibly grateful for the support they have shown to local older people.

## Afternoon Social Dance raises £2,000!



**We held our fourth fundraising social dance on Thursday, July 3, at the Winter Gardens' Pavilion Ballroom in Weston super Mare.**

More than 300 people attended, travelling from as far as Birmingham and Minehead.

The afternoon featured social dancing, demonstrations by local Age UK Somerset class participants, and a surprise medley of classical sequence dances by Weston competition dancers Jennifer Board and Bradley Winter.

The event, mostly organised by one of our Ageing



Well Volunteers, Tansin Benn, with support from Age UK Somerset staff, volunteers and Coutts staff, raised £2,000!

Prepare your moves and your dancing shoes!

**Next year's Social Dance will take place on 1st October 2026!**

## Donations coming in from Acorn Solicitors' Charity Wills Week

Age UK Somerset was delighted to be chosen as one of Acorn Solicitors (Street and Taunton) charities to benefit from their Charity Wills Week (from 13th October) where the team donated their time to write Wills in exchange for a donation instead of a fee.

Thank you to those who choose Age UK Somerset as the charity to support. As we go to press we don't know the total yet but in the past they have managed to raise over £14,000 for their chosen six charities.



**£2,000 Raised at Somerset  
Tourism Awards thanks to  
generous Prize donors**

Age UK Somerset was in attendance at the Bristol, Bath and Somerset Tourism Awards on 20th November as sponsor of the Age Friendly category. We are also grateful to be allowed to hold a raffle. Last year we raised £824 but this year we were so happy to raise **£2000!**

This would not have been possible without the fantastic prizes donated by some of the best tourism businesses in the region, the generosity of attendees on the evening who dug deep to buy lots of raffle tickets and a kind donation from The Litton to round the figure up!

## LOOK AT THESE AMAZING PRIZES!

We are so grateful to these awesome local tourism businesses for their incredibly generous donations!



### WINNING TICKET

Headline Sponsor - <b>St Austell Brewery</b> - Two night stay voucher (for two people) at one of their 45 managed houses in the South West!	
Two night Bed and Breakfast stay at <b>The Swan Hotel, Wells</b> , for two people with Dinner and a bottle of wine on the first night!	
Stay for two at <b>Lido Townhouse</b> with access to Lido Spa and Pool during your stay!	
Two night deluxe pod (sleeping 4) glamping break at <b>Bracelands Campsite</b> , Forest of Dean!	
<b>Allerford Tea Room &amp; Gardens</b> - Exmoor Cream Tea Voucher for Two!	
£75 Voucher to use at <b>Harts Barn Cookery School</b> , Longhope, Gloucestershire!	
Caving experience for two people from <b>Mendip Adventure!</b>	
<b>Noah's Ark Zoo Farm</b> - Giant Tortoise experience for two!	
Two Vouchers for a Guided Tour of <b>Shepton Mallet Prison!</b>	
<b>Ellenborough Park</b> Champagne Afternoon Tea for two!	
Together Spa Experience for two at <b>Middlewick Spa</b> , near Glastonbury, including a one hour pool and steam room session followed by a choice of 45 minute treatment!	
<b>Westonbirt</b> - Family admission to The National Arboretum!	

## Knit Happens: Local Knitters Raise £4,500 through The Big Knit!

A huge thank you to all our wonderful local knitters who took part in The Big Knit this year.

Together you created 15,000 brilliant little hats raising £4,500 for Age UK Somerset!

[Learn more here](#)



the Big Knit



A BIG



## Back a Winner: Look Out for Age UK Somerset at Taunton Races in January

A hardy group of Age UK Somerset staff and Volunteers will be at the race meet in Taunton on Saturday 17th January 2026 to hold a charity exit collection courtesy of Taunton Race Course.

If you are going to the races please bring us:

1. your winnings,
2. a hot drink!





# Volunteering

## Could you make life brighter for local older people in 2026?



**Somerset ageUK**

**Let's make life brighter for older people in 2026**

Across Somerset and North Somerset more older people than ever need a friendly face, a listening ear, or a helping hand.

**Could you spare an hour a week to support someone nearby?**

With your help we can reach those who feel alone and make later life a little easier and a lot more joyful.

**Become a volunteer in 2026**

Call 01823 345627 email [volunteers@ageuksomerset.org.uk](mailto:volunteers@ageuksomerset.org.uk) or visit [www.ageuksomerset.org.uk/volunteering](http://www.ageuksomerset.org.uk/volunteering)

Registered Charity: 101590

## Not just for Christmas



In the run up to Christmas we get a lot of enquiries about Volunteering just for one day. Although we are grateful for the offers, as we invest so much time in recruiting, checking, training and supporting our volunteers it is impractical for us to do this for such a short-term commitment.

Our Volunteering roles mostly take up just 1 hour a week.

**If you are able to offer a longer-term commitment we need you!**

Especially in roles below....



Service needing Volunteers	What?	Where?
iCST - NEW PROJECT	30 friendly Volunteers sought to deliver individual Cognitive Stimulation Therapy sessions at the homes of clients living with dementia	Across Somerset and North Somerset
Ageing Well - Tai Chi	After full training to lead gentle Tai Chi sessions for small groups of older people	Nailsea (URGENT), Yatton, West Huntspill, Shipham, Cheddar, Clevedon
Ageing Well - Sit Fit and Fun	After full training to lead gentle, fun chair-based exercise sessions called 'Sit, Fit and Fun'.	Clevedon, Yatton, West Huntspill, Cheddar, Weston super Mare, Bleadon
Charity Trustee	To sit on our Board and work with the Chairperson and Chief Executive to ensure that the organisation has a clear vision, mission and strategic direction.	Anywhere in Somerset or North Somerset
Wellbeing Volunteers - both Walk and Talk or Wellbeing Friends	We are looking for friendly people who would enjoy spending a short amount of time each week, with a local older person, to provide companionship and reduce loneliness, either as Walk and Talk Volunteers or visiting at home as a Wellbeing Friend.	Weston-super-Mare, Wellington, Bradford on Tone, Minehead, Burnham-on-Sea, Highbridge, Axbridge, Glastonbury, Holcombe, Shepton Mallet, Street, Wells, Chard, Crewkerne, Wincanton, Yeovil.



**Could you do this?**

**Friendly people urgently needed as Walk and Talk Volunteers and Wellbeing Friends**

Especially in Axbridge, Bradford on Tone, Burnham-on-Sea, Chard, Crewkerne, Glastonbury, Highbridge, Holcombe, Minehead, Shepton Mallet, Street, Wellington, Wells, Weston super Mare, Wincanton and Yeovil.

You'd be helping a local older person feel less lonely by spending a little time each week either Walking and Talking or visiting them at home to provide some company.

**Please could you help?**

Please get in touch for more information:

 **01823 345627**  
 **volunteers@ageuksomerset.org.uk**  
 **www.ageuksomerset.org.uk/volunteering**



Age UK Somerset, Ash House, Cook Way, Taunton, Somerset TA2 6BJ Reg Charity No. 1015900

**Learn more & Enquire about Volunteering**

## Long serving Volunteers get a treat!

Six of our longest serving Volunteers were successfully nominated for and given the treat of a well-deserved break via the Room to Reward (Hotel breaks for Volunteers and Hidden Heroes) scheme.

The photo shows our wonderful Information and Advice Volunteer, Kay Smith, enjoying herself at the Saunton Sands Hotel.



### **A fine afternoon at Clevedon Hall**

Here are some of our North Somerset Volunteers enjoying an early Christmas treat at the magnificent [Clevedon Hall](#).

We don't want our other Volunteers to feel left out, so as well as VIP reserved seats at our Christmas Carol Service, as a small token of our appreciation they will also be enjoying Coffee and Mince Pies in Wells - thanks to [The Swan Hotel](#) and [Burns the Bread](#), and a festive lunch at [The Great Western Hotel](#), Taunton.



## Help solve the loneliness crisis this winter.



Eva, 74

“Loneliness creeps up on you. It’s awful.”

During the winter months, many older people in Somerset and North Somerset feel lonely, forgotten and like they have no one to turn to.

No older person should feel this way and we're working to change that for as many older people as we can.

But we need to work together. We need your support.

## Across the UK almost a million older people will face a hidden crisis this winter: loneliness.

Most people won't notice. They won't see the days spent alone, in silence. They won't realise the risks – like lonely people being 25% more likely to develop dementia. They won't understand that, for so many, the phone never rings – not even on Christmas Day.

**But Age UK Somerset sees this loneliness crisis. And by donating today (or volunteering), you can help us tackle it across Somerset and North Somerset.**

**Donate to help us tackle the crisis of loneliness this winter**



## Memory Connections Group Facilitator (Part-time)



[Learn more about this Job Vacancy](#)

Working closely with the Memory Connections team, this role presents an exciting opportunity to deliver our Memory Connections MCST programme in Somerset and North Somerset.

The programme offers enjoyable weekly sessions where group members take part in stimulating games and activities designed to assist those with mild to moderate dementia in maintaining their memory and thinking skills. Fun really is right at the heart of it all and you will need to develop creative theme-based subjects to facilitate discussion and participation.

## What's it like working



# at Age UK Somerset?

(from Staff Engagement Survey 2025)

people difference warmth  
ethos dedication commitment  
valued rewarding work-life  
flexible caring friendly supportive  
improving new skills  
good atmosphere

4.7\*

average rating



## We want your Voice to be heard



If you are over 60 and living in Somerset or North Somerset we need you to join our new 'Somerset Older Opinions Matter' (SOOM) survey group!

Age UK Somerset exists to make life better for older people in Somerset & North Somerset. Through the SOOM, Somerset Older Opinions Matter project we seek their responses through short, monthly surveys to help us discover what's important to local older people. The answers may shape our services and help us to campaign for a better later life for all.

**We want to make sure local older people's voices are heard.**

Click here for the latest survey!  
or visit  
[www.soom.org.uk](http://www.soom.org.uk)

## If you are over 60 and living in Somerset or North Somerset we need you to take part in our 'Somerset Older Opinions Matter' (SOOM) surveys

Age UK Somerset exists to help older people in our area to live their best lives.

We have set up SOOM, Somerset Older Opinions Matter, to help us learn what the issues of greatest importance are for local older people and what needs to be done or offered to make later life better.

**We want to make sure local older people's voices are heard.**

## Stuck for a Christmas Gift idea?

We are very fortunate to have as our Patron, Dr Lucy Pollock.

Lucy is an author and Consultant Geriatrician in Somerset. She has been working in Geriatric medicine helping older people for 30 years, and has learned useful things about life from a great many older people.

Her book "The Golden Rule - Lessons in living from a doctor of ageing", contains some of the invaluable lessons she has learnt from working with older people, from tales of loss, to impossible families, and the importance of learning to live with uncertainty. The very readable book is written with warmth, compassion and a large dose of humour!

DR LUCY POLLOCK

‘Compassionate and wise, makes for  
empowering reading’ *Observer*

The

Golden

Rule

## Lessons in living from a doctor of ageing



[Learn more and Buy here](#)

### Christmas Office Closure

**Our Office will be closed between 5pm on Tuesday 23rd December until 9am on Friday 2nd January 2026.**

During this time the Age UK Advice Line is still available 8am-7pm by calling **0800 678 1602**.

[Emergency Telephone Numbers can be viewed here](#)

**Best wishes for a  
Merry Christmas and  
a Happy and Healthy  
New Year from all of us  
at**





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Age UK Somerset, Ash House, Bindon Road,  
Taunton, Somerset TA2 6BJ

[www.ageuksomerset.org.uk](http://www.ageuksomerset.org.uk)

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