

# Advantage

Age Scotland  
Love later life

Age Scotland's magazine: autumn 2019, issue 55

Handing petition  
signatures to No 10

## CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE FREE TV LICENCE



Report: Waiting  
for Care, p 6



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Ambassadors, p 22



# Letting you focus on the important things



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**Advantage is the Age Scotland magazine that provides information, inspiration and ideas to empower Scotland's older people, their friends, families and carers.**

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If you have news, events or issues that you would like Advantage to cover, please get in touch. We would also welcome ideas on how we might improve the magazine. To stop receiving Advantage, please just get in touch with us on the details below.

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Brian Sloan, Chief Executive

### Welcome to your Autumn edition of Advantage!

It's that time of year where the nights are starting to draw in and many of us look forward to an evening cosied up in front of our favourite TV show or a great film. Yet for thousands of older people in Scotland the TV is their main form of company all year round. When the BBC announced that it planned to end the free TV licence for over 75s, we knew the impact this would have and that we had to act. You can read about our campaign and how you can get involved on page 4.

In this edition you'll also learn about our new training aimed at carers of those living with dementia (page 10), hear how we are helping veterans to boost their health and wellbeing (page 15), find out the theme for our National Conference (page 27) and much, much more!

We do hope you enjoy this edition of Advantage and always look forward to your feedback. If you have any projects or campaigns you'd like us to showcase or if you would like to contribute a piece to the magazine, please do get in touch.

Brian Sloan

# SWITCHED OFF!

## Our campaign to protect TV licences for over 75s

The free TV licence entitlement for over 75s is set to end next year, 20 years after it was first introduced, if current plans proceed. From that point on, over 75s will have a choice: find £154.50 every year for a TV licence, or switching off altogether.

### What's the background to this?

Free TV licences for everyone aged over 75 were introduced in 2000, with the UK Government meeting the cost of the benefit. In 2015 the UK Government struck a deal with the BBC which ended that subsidy, meaning the BBC would have to meet the cost itself beyond 2020. The Government then gave the BBC the responsibility for administering the benefit, and the BBC subsequently announced it could no longer afford to maintain free TV licences for over 75s. Following a public consultation launched at the end of 2018, the BBC confirmed it was going ahead with plans to end this entitlement from 2020.

We believe the BBC should never have had to make this decision in the first place and the UK Government must foot the bill for this as per their 2017 manifesto commitment to “maintain all other pensioner benefits, including free bus passes, eye tests, prescriptions and TV licences for the duration of this parliament.”

### But why are free TV licences so important?

There are more than 442,000 over 75s in Scotland, all of whom are eligible to opt in for a free TV licence and half of them say that their main form of company is the TV, radio or their pet. For these people, their TV is a lifeline which gives them access to news, culture and entertainment in their own home, keeping them connected to the world. Add in the fact that nearly half a million older people in Scotland do not use the internet – which is increasingly where younger generations get their news, entertainment and information – it's clear that the TV is an essential, not a luxury, for a decent quality of life.

From 2020 people over the age of 75 will need to find an extra £154.50 every year or risk prosecution and a £1000 fine. The only exception is for people receiving Pension Credit, who will continue to be entitled to the free benefit. This benefit however has just become out of reach for thousands of older people and 40% of those entitled to it do not claim it, meaning a huge number of people will still miss out.

### Can't older people just dig deep and pay?

More than 150,000 older people in Scotland are living in relative poverty after their housing costs. Six in 10 pensioners who live alone tell us that they already find it difficult to pay their fuel bill. For older people on low or fixed incomes, the cost of a TV licence is a significant expense and those who are already barely scraping by will struggle the most. Our research shows that thousands of older people across Scotland will either have to go without TV or cut back on heating and food if this plan proceeds. Even for those who are relatively well-off, introducing a system of means-testing would be costly and indeed inappropriate, as the BBC has no experience of dealing with benefits entitlement.



## What has Age Scotland done about this?

Together with our partners Age UK, Age Cymru and Age NI, we have been leading the charge against the proposals since they first emerged.

Our UK-wide petition calling on the free TV licence for over 75s to be maintained was signed by an incredible 634,334 people right across the UK and was handed in to the new Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, at the beginning of August. What's more, our research found that people of all age groups – not just older people – were deeply supportive of retaining this benefit and believe that the UK Government should stick to the promise it made in the 2017 General Election Conservative manifesto.

We've also been in touch with MPs of all parties to emphasise the importance of this benefit and we've been working closely with many who support the campaign. Ultimately though, the only people who can reverse this decision are the UK Government, which is why our petition went to them.

## What happens now?

Boris Johnson has said the BBC should “cough up” and meet this cost, and we hope this is an indication that the new Prime Minister agrees in principle that older people should have this benefit, even though he's not yet overtly offering to fund it at this point and the BBC have reiterated that they cannot afford to.

We will be keeping up the pressure in the coming weeks. At the time of writing, a General Election could be upon us, and securing commitments from the main parties to reverse the current plans and instead maintain free TV licences for over 75s, even at this late stage, will be central to our campaigning efforts.



Delivering petition signatures to No 10 Downing Street

## What can I do?

If you've not already done so, please write to your Member of Parliament and explain why you believe free TV licences for over 75s should be retained. If you're on social media, you might choose to post about your support for this campaign, using the #SwitchedOff hashtag. You could also go to your local MP's next advice surgery and raise this issue. If a General Election is called, you could attend a local hustings and raise it there.

If the older people of Scotland continue to pull together, this is a campaign we can win.

**To find out more about our Switched Off campaign, please contact our Policy Engagement and Campaigns Officer Simon Ritchie on 0333 32 32 400.**

# Waiting for Care: Is Scotland meeting its commitment to older people?

Our latest report **'Waiting for Care: Is Scotland meeting its commitment to older people?'** has found that too many older people in Scotland are waiting too long to access social care that they need, and are entitled to.

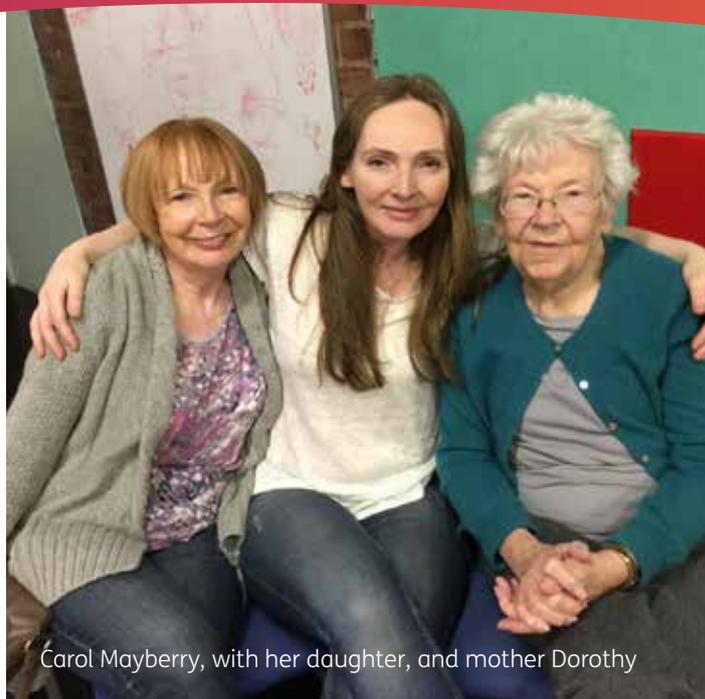
We hear of many instances from our freephone helpline that older people have been struggling to get free personal care, which includes things like help with washing and dressing.

This was the case for Carol and her mother Dorothy who has dementia, who had to wait six months before she received a community care assessment from the council. The toll on the family was considerable and as Carol and her husband Richard don't live nearby they felt it was necessary to privately arrange for Carol to go into a care home.

**'Because we had taken this necessary step to keep her safe, we then found out that it could take up to a year or more to get an assessment and approval to receive the council's statutory funding. We could not find out where Dorothy was placed in the system despite the repeated requests'**

**Richard Mayberry - Dorothy's son-in-law**

While there are no guidelines on how long a council should take to give someone a community care assessment after requesting one, there is guidance on how long you should have to wait for care after



Carol Mayberry, with her daughter, and mother Dorothy

you've been assessed as needing it. This means that if you've been assessed as having 'critical' or 'substantial' needs you should receive free personal care within six weeks of your assessment.

However our findings showed 43% of older people waited longer than the national guidelines to get the social care they need. As this information is based on freedom of information requests and less than half of Local Authorities were able to provide the information we asked for, it is likely this figure is actually higher. One of the main recommendations from our report was better data collection on waiting times to help with analysis and service planning and delivery.

Whilst Free Personal and Nursing Care has been a flagship policy ever since it was first introduced in Scotland, it's clear there are significant challenges ahead due to increased demand, as well as difficulties with the recruitment and retention of social care staff.

Free Personal and Nursing Care helps older people to live independently in their own home, or in a care home. **It is a policy to be celebrated, but also in desperate need of support.**

If you're affected by any of these issues please call our freephone helpline which operates Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm on **0800 12 44 222**. They can provide a listening ear and help signpost you to further information.



# What happens when you call our helpline?

**Some people can feel a bit nervous about contacting a helpline for the first time. Others may be unsure if we are the right people to call about a particular issue. We're here to reassure you, there's no question too big or small. If we can't help, we'll find out who can.**

## You give us a call

Perhaps you're struggling with a practical problem and need some advice. Or maybe you want to check you are receiving all the support that is available to you. Whatever it is, you can contact our team Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. It's free to call and completely confidential: **0800 12 44 222**

## We will listen

One of our friendly advisors will answer the call, listen to you and ask you some questions about your situation to better understand how they can help. They will either give you advice on next steps on the call or will arrange a call back with a specialist advisor for a time that suits you. In some instances we won't directly be able to help but we can find out who can and give you contact details for them.

## We will find a solution

Our advisor will provide a personalised service, tailoring the advice to suit your needs and offering solutions that may help in other areas of your life beyond what you initially called about. Any advice given to you can also be sent in writing by post or by email as a follow up if that is useful to you. We also have over 60 publications that can help with many of life's challenges and we can post out any that are of interest to you for free. These are also available in large print.

Age Scotland advisor Morna



**Give us a call on  
0800 12 44 222  
We're here to help**

## Your voice matters

We are always open to feedback and suggestions on how we can better support our callers. During the call, you may be asked if you want to take part in our quality assurance survey where you can let us know how things went for you and how our team helped you. All your feedback is completely confidential and appreciated.



Planning the work of our prevention group. We'll be going around Scotland - in August we were in Stirling to discuss housing.

# Dementia Prevention

Age Scotland recently began a five-year project funded by the Life Changes Trust called 'About Dementia'. The project works with people affected by dementia to make changes to the things that are most important to them. We know that a good policy doesn't always lead to the change we want to see. We also know that people with dementia and unpaid carers are in the best position to say what is and isn't working and most importantly, how to do it better.

Over the next five years we will bring together people affected by dementia, and organisations who are interested in working for change, to look at how we can improve policy and practice across many different areas of life.

'About Dementia' forum meetings will take place four times per year around Scotland. We will also look in more detail at some policy issues focusing on how to develop solutions and taking action. The first of these are 'Human Rights of Unpaid Carers', 'Housing', 'Transport and Mobility' and 'Prevention and Living Well'.

## Focus on Prevention:

Scotland's national dementia strategy often faces criticism because it focuses only on service provision and on research to find a remedy while ignoring the widely established public health principle that prevention is better than cure. That is why we want to see a third strand of activity added to what is being done on dementia care and cure and why

the sub-group on the prevention theme will run throughout the five-year lifetime of the project.

Opinion polling suggests that the public are now more concerned over dementia than cancer yet there has never been a dementia prevention campaign in Scotland. Though there are some factors that influence the likelihood of developing dementia that can't be changed, there are a number of lifestyle factors that can. These also tend to be the same factors that can influence the rate of progression of the disease.

We have long been aware that smoking makes the single biggest contribution to increasing the likelihood of cancer and other conditions. There is now equally strong evidence that smoking also impacts on dementia – as do other factors such as diet, exercise, education and social interaction.

This doesn't mean that people who already have a diagnosis can't do anything to increase their chances of keeping well for longer. The dementia prevention sub-group will, therefore, look at and share evidence about what people can do to live well whether they have a diagnosis of dementia or not.

Ensuring people live and age well will bring substantial benefits both to individuals and to society as a whole.

If you would like to get involved with 'About Dementia' or to receive more information about the forum's work please contact us at **[aboutdementia@agescotland.org.uk](mailto:aboutdementia@agescotland.org.uk)**



# The housing and energy needs of remote Scotland

**We want to ensure that older people in Scotland live in housing which meets their needs and that there is sufficient housing available to them as their circumstances change.**

Two years ago Age Scotland conducted a nationwide housing survey of older people which gave fascinating insights and valuable data. This has helped shape work undertaken by the Scottish Government in this area.

We wanted to further explore how the housing and household energy needs of older people in rural and remote areas differed from the Scotland wide picture as a whole.

To this end, and thanks to funding from the Scottish Government, we have completed a major study of the housing needs of older people in Orkney.

Orkney has one of the fastest ageing populations in Scotland and it has been projected that by 2024 30% of Orkney's population will be of pensionable age, against a Scottish average of 23%, with a fall amongst residents of working age.

We wanted to capture information about current housing stock, housing needs, to determine awareness of energy efficiency initiatives and establish how much older people were spending on energy bills per year.

We had a great response to the survey with feedback from 978 people aged over 55 resident in Orkney, which equates to approximately 18% of people in this age group.

Our report has highlighted a need for more action to 'future-proof' homes on the island and build more suitable accommodation. Furthermore, accessibility, isolation and high fuel costs were key concerns for older people on the islands.

## The cost of household energy

More than half of respondents said they were concerned about rising fuel costs. Almost half (47%) said they turned down their heating to reduce their bills. One in nine older residents said they struggled to pay their fuel bills some or all of the time.

More than a quarter of people aged 75 and over plan to move to supported accommodation, raising concerns that there is not enough housing to fit their needs.

One in nine respondents felt their current home did not fit their needs, but could not find anywhere suitable close by, or were put off by the cost of moving. Many said they worried about feeling cut off and isolated as they got older, especially if there was a lack of public transport.

The findings from this survey will help us, Age Scotland Orkney and other local partners to identify the needs of residents of current pensionable age in order to inform planning for the future in areas such as housing, healthcare, benefits and fuel poverty.

You can read more at [www.age.scot/orkneyhousingurvey](http://www.age.scot/orkneyhousingurvey)



## New dementia training

Following the success of our Early Stage Dementia Project, Age Scotland is delighted to have new 3-year funding from the Life Changes Trust and the Robertson Trust to develop new dementia training.

We will continue to deliver our dementia training to member groups, charities and workplaces but we will also be developing new training to fill gaps in the training that's available. This will be:

**Rights-based training for carers of people living with dementia** – many older carers miss out on the help they are entitled to. They may not see themselves as carers and may not have time or energy to seek out information about their rights and the rights of the person they care for. We will listen to what carers want to know and take our training to carers groups.

**Dementia inclusion training** – there are many services which want to include people affected by dementia in what they do but don't quite know how to go about it. We will be working with organisations as diverse as befriending services and dementia friendly choirs to identify what works for people living with dementia to be welcome, included and valued.

For more information call **0333 323 2400** or email [dementia@agescotland.org.uk](mailto:dementia@agescotland.org.uk).

## Knowing your rights

Everyone should be informed about their rights and choices, with easy access to the information and advice that make that possible. It's not always obvious what services, benefits or other help is available to older people, with many people feeling unsure of where to turn. Although information and advice sounds simple, it can be life-changing.

Our range of free information guides for older people in Scotland continues to grow and our information team works hard to keep all our guides updated so that older people can be better informed and access the right support.

Just some of our recent work includes

- **Adding information about Frank's Law which extends the right to Free Personal Care to all ages**
- **Explaining the changes to Pension Credit for some mixed age couples**
- **Detailing the new rights to support for carers in Scotland**
- **Keeping up to date with the new benefits and updates from Social Security Scotland with our **Benefit and Pension Changes** guide**
- **Launching a new guide on the Scottish Funeral Support payment**

All our guides are completely free. You can download them from our website or request copies to be posted to you by calling our helpline team on **0800 12 44 222** or emailing [publications@agescotland.org.uk](mailto:publications@agescotland.org.uk).



# Care homes: Making an informed choice

Most older people live at home with support from friends, family and sometimes carers but some people need to move to a care home to get the all-round help and support they need. If you think you may need to move into a care home, first ask for a new or updated care needs assessment to see if support is available for you to continue to stay at home.

Moving from your own home to a care home can be a difficult experience even if it is the best or only way of receiving the care you need. It can sometimes be a decision which needs to be made quickly after a fall or stroke or time spent in hospital. Friends and family can support you to make decisions and if you have granted someone power of attorney they may be able to help with decisions about money and your welfare.

Many families only need to find out about care homes once in a generation and there can be a lot to consider. Age Scotland has produced five care homes guides which look at different aspects of care homes.



**Health and Wellbeing** looks at what life should be like in a care home for it to feel like somewhere where you can be yourself and have privacy, dignity and as much independence as you can.



**Friends and Family** covers issues for people who are close to someone who has moved into a care home.



**The Care Home Checklist** helps you to think about what a care home environment needs to be like for it to be the right home for you.



**Before you Move** identifies many of the practical things which need to be done and people you need to contact before you move.



**Funding** explains the complicated mix of issues to be taken into account when funding is assessed including Free Personal and Nursing Care, rules about whether your home is counted as an asset and the formula used to work out your contribution to your care home costs.

Age Scotland has also been supporting Trading Standards Scotland, COSLA and a range of other agencies to create a new guide about Care Home Contracts. This has been developed in response to an investigation by the Competition and Markets Authority which advised care homes that to comply with consumer law they need to provide clear information to residents and their families, treat residents fairly, provide a good quality service and have a fair procedure for complaints.

**For copies of any of these guides or advice about your rights call the Age Scotland helpline on 0800 12 44 222.**



Have you tried

# WALKING NETBALL?

A great way to keep active, meet new people and have fun!

Do you have fond memories of playing netball when you were younger? Always wanted to play but you were worried about the rules, or about not keeping up with the game? Walking Netball could very well be the programme for you!

## What is Walking Netball?

It is netball, but at a walking pace, with adapted rules and court size. Sessions are about having fun and getting active, the health benefits are great! It is suitable for all ages and abilities and is a slower version of the game. At many of the session's participants stay for a chat and a cup of tea, coffee and cake, enjoying the company of others.

## Should I give it a try?

It's important to keep your body and brain active as you age and walking netball is structured in a fun way to do just that! All facilitators who lead the sessions are trained to support participants to get involved at a level they feel comfortable. It is becoming increasingly popular and there are now 312 Walking Netballers participating across 25 sessions in Scotland. The average age is 63.8 with some participants in their late 80s and early 90s so don't be scared to give it a try!

## Where can I try it?

Walking Netball sessions are all around the country with more and more sessions being set up and organised as a result of a new project launched by Netball Scotland, Age Scotland and Breathing Space. This project named "Walking Netball – More than a Game" has allowed 3 Walking Netball Activators to be funded, tasked to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of people through walking netball. If you would like to find out where your local session is or more about the walking netball programme visit [www.netballscotland.com/get-involved/walking-netball-3](http://www.netballscotland.com/get-involved/walking-netball-3) or contact one of the walking netball activators on one of the numbers below.

"You build such good friendships"

"The good thing is... I can actually do it!"

"You develop a love for the game"

**West Scotland:**  
**Billy Singh 07990 071903**

**East and Central Scotland:**  
**Kate Thomson 07990 071896**

**North Scotland:**  
**Alice McKnight 07990 071902**

Helen Gillon, Community Connector



# COMMUNITY CONNECTING - VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT!

**Community Connecting is a volunteer-led service which aims to reduce social isolation and loneliness in older adults across Scotland. The team do this by matching people with community groups that offer friendship, social activities, health and fitness groups, events and more.**

This year the team have made approximately 1,000 friendship calls and connected people to 600 organisations across Scotland. None of this would have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the Community Connecting volunteers. We are delighted to celebrate our fantastic volunteers and showcase the impact they have made. Without further ado, meet Helen!

## **So Helen, what's been your highlight as a volunteer with Age Scotland?**

There have been quite a few highlights this year! There are two that I can think of that will always stick. I'd been speaking to a lady for a couple of weeks and when I called her to catch up, she recognised my voice immediately and remembered my name. That was lovely. Another highlight was when I had been supporting a lady over the phone who had recently become housebound. I suggested a befriending organisation and made a referral on her behalf. After a couple of weeks I called her again and she sounded so happy. She thanked me for my help and was pleased to have a befriender that she saw on a weekly basis.

## **Can you tell us about any challenges you've faced in your role?**

A challenge for me has been getting to grips with the computer systems and the processes! Luckily in the office there is great support and some very helpful written notes to help me if I'm stuck.

## **What do you like to do when you're not volunteering?**

I have a 13 year old grandson who comes over for meals once or twice a week. I am also a member of Edinburgh's University of the Third Age and attend their yoga and jazz groups. I sometimes go out with friends and family, listen to all types of music, go to the opera and musicals when I visit my daughter in London, read widely and do the occasional jigsaw.

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## **Calling all member groups!**

Would you like us to refer potential new members to your group or organisation? 100 Age Scotland member groups around Scotland have already joined Community Connecting, making themselves available in order to help enrich other people's lives.

Find out more about Community Connecting and how you can get involved by calling our Helpline on **0800 12 44 222**.



# Walking Connects: Increasing wellbeing through walking

**Walking Connects**, a project from Living Streets Scotland, has been working in partnership with older people to make walking in later life more accessible and enjoyable. We hear from Project Manager Penny Morriss about their latest work.

We know from conversations with our partners and project participants that too often our streets don't meet the needs of many residents. This can reduce opportunities to be active, contribute to social isolation, as well as cutting people off from their communities and preventing them from playing an active role in local decision making. Everyday trips to the shops, for coffee, to catch a bus, or to catch up with friends can be made more difficult as a result of poor quality or badly considered pavements, crossings and public space – and often, simple improvements and better maintenance can make all the difference.

Our recently launched **Walking Connects Case Studies** document the successes and challenges encountered by our project participants taking action for age-inclusive streets and spaces. The case studies highlight a continuing need to work to improve understanding of the impact of poor quality streets and public spaces on older people's ability to stay active and connected through walking, as well as recognising that some people can feel their needs are less important and so can be hesitant to ask for improvements. These can make all the difference: a simple change like a well located bench or fixes to pavement potholes can mean someone being able to confidently get out and about.



Simple improvements can make all the difference | Fun at the S

Our project participants led on changes that made walking easier not just for themselves, but for other local residents, and are a great example of how to go about getting better local streets for walking. The case studies also highlight the value to local decision makers of working with people who are older and who may have a different perspective on streets and spaces. They can provide answers with a real impact for residents of all ages, making spaces better for us all to walk in.

We've worked with project participants to co-produce our **Guide to Getting Better Streets**, which we hope will inspire more people to take action locally for necessary and often small-scale street improvements that can make walking easier. Both the Case Studies and Guide are now available from Living Streets website.

We're keen to identify some new partners who would like to help us test the guide, so if you would like some support to raise an issue that is acting as a barrier to walking, or if you have a story about how your streets and spaces either help or hinder you getting out and walking, we'd be really keen to hear from you.

Contact us on [scotland@livingstreets.org.uk](mailto:scotland@livingstreets.org.uk) / **0131 243 2649** or visit [www.livingstreets.org.uk/products-and-services/projects/walking-connects-in-scotland](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/products-and-services/projects/walking-connects-in-scotland)



Supporting Senior Games (photo courtesy of Erskine)



## Boosting older veterans' health and well-being

### As the Veterans' Project marks its second birthday Project Lead Doug Anthony reflects on what's been achieved and what next.

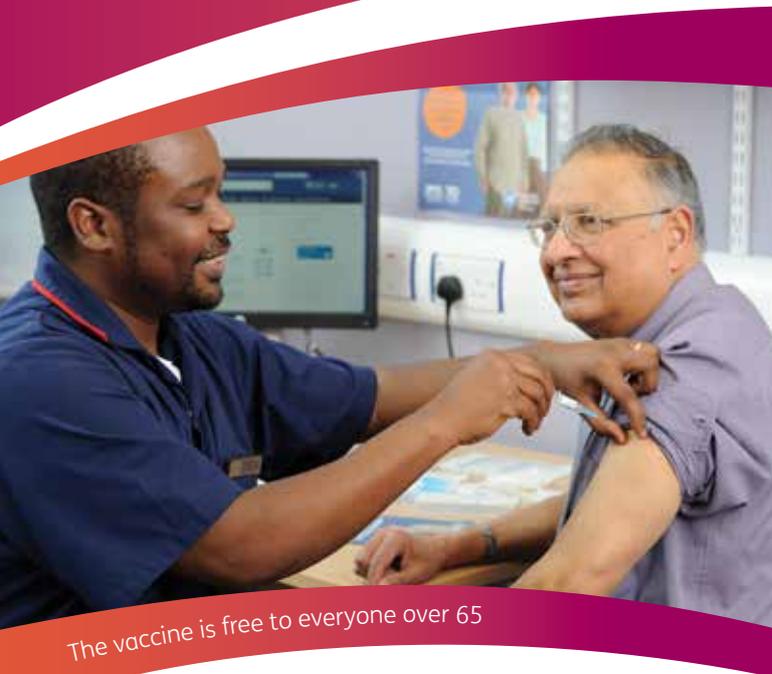
This summer we completed our suite of advice guides for older veterans with publication of The Older Veterans' Guide to Health and Wellbeing. The guide offers tips on how to stay well, provides advice on health matters, and introduces wellbeing support organisations available to older people who have served in the British military as regulars, reservists, merchant mariners or national servicemen and women. It also includes stories of older veterans who have made positive changes to boost their health and well-being. You can order this, and our older veterans' guides to later life, housing, and sensory loss, free from the [Age Scotland helpline](https://www.agescotland.org.uk) on **0800 12 44 222** or by email to [publications@agescotland.org.uk](mailto:publications@agescotland.org.uk). We can also supply free plastic leaflet holders to keep them together.

In researching stories for the new guide, I was struck by how vital comradeship, the special bond of friendship shared by those who have served in the forces, can be to enabling older veterans to enjoy a happy and healthy life. Alan was one: he told me that while the NHS had saved his life, it was gardening alongside other veterans that 'gave him life'. That's why we're inviting older veterans in community groups to take part in a challenge to collectively boost their physical activity levels.

Supporting the challenge will be a priority for our project over the coming year. Participants needn't be in dedicated veterans' clubs: they could be involved in an older people's club or service, so long as there are at least three veterans age 65 or older willing to give it a go.

We'll also soon be on the road again with the Early Stage Dementia project offering awareness training. Why? Because we know there are Age Scotland member groups that have yet to take advantage of our free training days, and because participants to-date have told us they've found it helpful. "I had no idea there was such a great support network out there for veterans" said one. Another participant said that "it's raised my awareness of a difference in lifestyle and background and given me a starting point from which to hold conversations with veterans."

**For Veterans' Project updates and enquiries:** email [veteransproject@agescotland.org.uk](mailto:veteransproject@agescotland.org.uk), call **0333 323 2400**, visit [www.agescotland.org.uk/veterans](http://www.agescotland.org.uk/veterans) or follow [@AgeScotVeterans](https://www.facebook.com/AgeScotVeterans) on Twitter and Facebook.



The vaccine is free to everyone over 65

**There's a lot of incorrect information about the flu and the flu vaccine, so this year NHS Health Scotland and the Scottish Government are launching a brand new campaign.**

Flu is much worse than a bad cold. It's a highly infectious disease, with symptoms that come on very quickly and it can hit anyone. In the most serious cases, flu can bring on other complications, and every year thousands are hospitalised with flu in Scotland.

Scotland's Chief Medical Officer recommends you should get the free flu vaccine every year if you are over the age of 65, have a health condition, or provide care and support to those who are most vulnerable.

If you're 65 or over you need extra protection because your immunity reduces over time, even if you feel fit and well. It's also important that anyone who works in health and social care, or is directly involved in patient care, gets immunised. The vaccine reduces the risk of getting flu yourself, as well as spreading it to others.

# TRUST THE FACTS. GET THE VACCINE.

## FLU FACTS

- **Flu is much worse than a bad cold – it can be life threatening.**
- **Thousands are hospitalised with flu every year in Scotland.**
- **People over the age of 65 or with a health condition are most at risk.**

The flu vaccine is available from October to March. It takes around 10 days to work, so the sooner you get it the better. The vaccine is free to anyone over the age of 65, those with a health condition like diabetes, heart disease or breathing problems or anyone working in social care or care homes.

It's important to get immunised every year because the virus changes constantly and your immunity reduces over time.

**The vaccine contains no live viruses, so it can't give you flu.**

Getting vaccinated is the safest, most effective way to protect yourself and others from flu.

To get vaccinated, contact your GP practice to make an appointment. It only takes a few minutes and it'll help to keep you well over the winter.



To find out further information about flu or the flu vaccine visit **[www.flufacts.scot](http://www.flufacts.scot)**.

# OLDER PEOPLE'S CHAMPIONS: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

**We sat down with Councillor Elaine Thornton-Nicol, the Older People's Champion for Scottish Borders Council, to hear about her role...**

## How would you describe the role of Older People's Champion?

It is what you choose to make it. When I agreed to the nomination, I asked for a role descriptor, because there was no point in me bumbling about the Borders hoping I am doing what is expected of me.

I see my role firstly as a listening one. The best people to shape older people's services are the older people who will use them. Their voice must be heard. I work with officers across the council to feed back on various issues that older people have raised with me. I am pleased to say, they are listening, supporting and, where possible, acting.

## Council budgets are under pressure. What is your budget?

There's no budget line attached to the role, so there's no cost to the council. In some ways this is about working smarter with the resources already available.

## What does your role look like day to day, week to week?

I'm constantly on the go! Working with voluntary groups, commenting on services, helping others to understand what older people need, want, and – let's be very truthful – don't like.

## Has the role been what you expected when you first accepted it?

Yes and no. I thought I would be able to join the network of thirty-one other champions, some of whom would be in their second term, who would be able to share their knowledge and offer opportunities to take their learning to the Scottish Borders. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Most



Cllr Elaine Thornton-Nicol

councils do not have an Older People's Champion. Some authorities claim to have an Older People's Officer, but no description of what they actually do. Others have no one specifically tasked with ensuring that older people are heard.

## What are you working on now?

The creation of an Older People's Directory of services, organisations and groups locally; raising awareness of dementia-friendly practices within the council; making transport more age-friendly; a flu vaccine take-up campaign... and getting a network of other Older People's Champions across all 32 local authorities!

## Any advice for Advantage readers on how they can help?

Contact your local authority and ask if they have an Older People's Champion. If they don't, tell them they should! Feel free to share Age Scotland's role descriptor, or put them in touch with me for a chat.

Oh, and finally... an Older People's Champion need not necessarily be an older person - they could be as young as me!



Age Scotland and the Scottish Older People's Assembly are calling on every Scottish Local Authority to appoint an Older People's Champion. For more information, please contact the Age Scotland Policy & Communications team on **0300 323 2400** or email **communications@agescotland.org.uk**.

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# Do you think the media are ageist?

Does it feel to you that older people are ignored other than for doom and gloom predictions? Unless of course, you are 96 and climbed Ben Nevis for your birthday!

And are you among the people who get very angry about the use of those wrinkly hand pictures to illustrate anything to do with older people?

I don't think the media is Ageist. At least, not deliberately so. **They aren't anti older people. They just don't know anything about us!**

They are the victims of their own lack of understanding. It could be that they are a bit lazy too? The correct term is probably "Unthinking Ageism". Or perhaps "Unwitting Ageism"?

They have grown up in a culture where youth was everything. And by implication ageing was a bad thing. Like all of us, they have been subject to that negative stereotype of old age: decline, dependency, wrinkles, doom. And never having been old themselves they don't know any different do they? Haven't actually bothered to look around and see what has happened?

They see their grandma and think she is brilliant, still dancing, travelling, gardening, volunteering at 72. But they don't notice the rest of us!

Ageing today is a success story! New hips, new knees, stents, cataracts done, most illnesses sortable and we carry on enjoying life. Not only that, we have experience, we have made it, we know how to cope, we are tough. And we have matured. The long view of life has arrived and with it a great freedom to be who you are and do what you like. Lovely stage of life. The happiest too!

## So why aren't the media shouting all this?

Well, it isn't their job is it? Theirs is to produce headlines and bad news sells.

Actually what the media haven't yet spotted is that



Our guest article this edition comes from Joyce Williams. Joyce is 83 and took up blogging at 80 after realising, to her surprise, that life as an older person turned out to be great. And then found that millions of other people were discovering it too!

Joyce is leading a campaign to change that negative image of old age and replace it with a positive version. One that is relevant to the fresh active bonus years that are ageing today.

the Age Proud trend is creeping up on them. They are sliding into it. Our TV presenters no longer have to be young do they? The Ruth Beards and Attenboroughs are loved for their ability, character and enthusiasm. In fashion shoots, models are increasingly older and grey. That someone of 80 is getting married, acting, travelling, writing a book, painting, is almost unremarked isn't it? Just normal!

So whose job is it to spread this good news? Ours of course! We who have actually got there need to spread the news. Later years today are great years.

**We need to be age proud out loud. Take the fear out of ageing.**



L-R: First Minister jokes with Nan McKay Hall Member | Rosie's Family

## First Minister visits Member Group Nan McKay Hall

The Nan McKay Hall is a long-established organisation in the Southside of Glasgow, which hosts up to 35 groups and classes each week with approximately 30 different cultures benefitting from its activities. In August the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, visited the hall to open their new Community Health Suite.

**The Health Suite was funded by the hall's very first bequest from a past member, 'our Rosie' – Rosemary Carmichael. Her generosity enabled the Nan McKay Hall to improve health services for the local community.** The services, housed in a new portacabin, will include footcare, podiatry, hearing and eye clinics. The existing footcare clinic run by the Nan McKay Hall has over 350 users and is operated entirely by NHS educated local volunteers. Two of Rosie's brothers and their families were there to see the ribbon being cut and to get a look at the new facility. They were very appreciative of the way Rosie's gift was used. They also admired the bench and the plaque that was installed along with the health suite.

Also present at the official opening were Councillor Mhairi Hunter, Convener of Health and Social Care and chair of Glasgow City Integration Joint Board, and Gordon Smith, Manager of Glasgow City Council Social and Community Development. Commenting on the day, Chair of the Nan McKay Hall, Stuart McKenzie said 'This new health suite cements our position as a vital service at the heart of the community. It will allow us to massively expand both the health services on offer, and the number of patients we can see. I am grateful for the generosity both of Rosie Carmichael and our dedicated volunteers who give up their time to make this possible.'

Those gathered were moved when the First Minister took the opportunity to express her support to the Hall over the recent loss of Hall Treasurer Lesley Sweeney. Lesley had been a committee member and treasurer for over 20 years and was well known and respected by many in the local community.

The health suite opening formed part of the annual Summer Fayre which also showcases the work of the Hall's groups and classes. The Fayre raised over £500 to support the work of the hall over the coming months. Members of the Nevis Ensemble provided entertained for the day giving a tremendous fanfare prior to the cutting of the ribbon for the health suite.



Family with Nicola Sturgeon and Chair of Nan McKay Hall Stuart McKenzie | Busy Roads on Tiree in May | Spring Fling Ceilidh on Skye

## Island Hopping in Spring

As a national organisation, Age Scotland aims to connect with all older people regardless of where they live. National Community Development Officers Carole Anderson and Charlie Murphy were putting that principle into practice this Spring, with visits to the Isle of Skye, the Shetland Islands, the Isle of Lewis and to the Isle of Tiree.

On a beautiful sunny day, over 60 people attended the Spring Fling at the Aros Centre in Portree. With a theme of “Staying Safe, Well, Active and Connected” the Spring Fling was co-presented by Age Scotland’s Charlie Murphy, and Jo Cowan from Highland Senior Citizens’ Network. The day began with a short sketch to illustrate bogus callers. This was followed by elevator pitches from the police, fire service, befrienders groups, carers organisations, and NHS Highland Public Health amongst others. The co-hosts Tha Seo Math Dhuibh and Highland Council’s Tenant Participation Service also spoke about their work. The morning session was followed by lunch and an opportunity to browse the information stalls, while an afternoon inter-generational ceilidh completed an enjoyable day.

Carole Anderson’s visit to the Shetlands began with an interview on BBC Radio Shetland. The broadcast gave Carole and Veteran’s Project colleague Steve Henderson, who was also on the trip, an opportunity to talk about Age Scotland’s work nationally.

During her three days on Shetland, Carole attended various meetings. With assistance from the RVS, an open meeting was organised for local authority and third sector staff and volunteers to find out about Age Scotland and explore joint-working. Islesburgh Lunch Club, Disability Shetland and Scalloway Over 60s Club provided warm welcomes, and good contacts with these groups have now been established. Age Scotland is very grateful to everyone on Shetland who helped organise venues, provided possible contacts and took the time to come along to meetings and events.

In April there was more sunshine as Charlie hosted the Age Scotland Network meeting at the Failte Centre in Stornoway. As well as an update on the Veterans Project and the Western Isles Community Care Forum the attendees were treated to seated tai chi for arthritis. Groups from all over the Isle of Lewis were represented including one group from Great Bernera.

Slightly larger than Great Bernera is Tiree, the sunniest place in Britain, with a population of 650. In May, Healthy Argyll and Bute invited Age Scotland to be part of a series of health and wellbeing events, culminating in an information evening with a quiz as an added attraction. As well as giving talks on Age Scotland, Charlie presented a couple of taster sessions of Body Boosting Bingo. No luck with the quiz though!

Regional  
Ambassador update:

# Introducing Jim Slinger and Rob Snodgrass



**Age Scotland is delighted to announce that Jim Slinger and Rob Snodgrass have been appointed Age Scotland regional ambassadors. Jim is our new regional ambassador in the Ayrshires, and Rob takes on the role in Argyll and Bute.**

Age Scotland regional ambassadors are members of an Age Scotland member group or organisation who also give their time and expertise to the national charity. They advise and support Age Scotland on a range of membership matters and help us maintain good connections with our members across the country.

Both Jim and Rob bring a wealth of experience and interests to our growing team of regional ambassadors.

**Jim Slinger** is a retired business man. An electrician to trade he developed his own property maintenance business and has worked all over the UK. Jim grew up in Hurlford, near Kilmarnock, and when he retired a few years ago he returned to his home village. He is Vice Chair of Hurlford Age Concern which has more than 160 members from Hurlford and nearby towns and villages. Jim is responsible for the entertainments programme which operates 44 weeks of the year and arranges speakers, activities, outings, dinners as well as the popular annual holiday for 60 members to Blackpool. He is currently developing a regular Speakers' Corner forum for interested members.

Jim was also previously Chair of Hurlford Community Association guiding the Association through the Community Asset Transfer process when they took over responsibility for the community centre from the local authority. He continues to help the centre and is a member of the Community Association

Committee which is now responsible for looking after the building. Hurlford Age Concern is one of the key groups using the Centre, 3 days per week.

**Rob Snodgrass** started his career in marketing with a record company in London. It was there he met his wife. They set up home in Japan and Rob took up a marketing post with Honda, learning Japanese in the process. His career flourished and after 11 years living in Japan he transferred to Honda UK, and Europe. Rob retired from Honda in 2004, and returned to his home town of Helensburgh in Argyll and Bute six years ago.

He is a founder member of Grey Matters in Helensburgh which was set up to combat isolation and loneliness by encouraging older people to take an active part in community affairs, with support from Argyll & Bute Third Sector Interface. Rob is a passionate advocate of the value and importance of community groups and the difference they make to older people's lives. Grey Matters currently has 300 members and holds a Saturday morning meeting to discuss topics of concern to older people in the town. Local Councillors, the MSP and MP regularly attend these meetings. Grey Matters also organises outings and holidays and a wide variety of social and cultural groups for their members including an art group, a history group, a knitting group and a singing group called Local Vocals.

We wish Jim and Rob well in their new role.

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We are currently recruiting regional ambassadors in Edinburgh and Lothians, Highland and Fife. If any members would like to find out more about the role please do get in touch with Elizabeth Bryan, Community Development Manager, Age Scotland

Tel: **0333 323 2400**

Email: **members@agescotland.org.uk**



# MEN'S SHEDS UPDATE

Where the salmon swim and the Teviot joins the Tweed, Kelso, famous for its abbey, castle, rugby club, and racecourse, now boasts a Men's Shed. It was four long years in the making but the Kelso Men's Shed, next to the Co-op in Roxburgh Street, opened its doors on 1 May 2019. They have a membership approaching 90 members, including 15 women. The steering group showed immense patience and tenacity in making it a reality. The object of the Men's Shed is to bring people together. It provides Kelso with a community hub offering recreational activities that meet the social, health and well-being needs of people of all ages and backgrounds living in and around the town. The Kelso Stick Makers are now using the shed as well as a local art group. The shed gives its members a sense of purpose and a strong camaraderie has developed.



John Gowers, Chair, using the PAT Testing Kit

Bob Stather, the shed's treasurer, highlights the benefits for shedders: **“By participating in the activities, it keeps them physically active and problem solving in the activities keeps them mentally alert. Being involved in the Shed allows our members to mix socially and have a place to meet and talk with like-minded individuals. There is no pressure on our members, it is a relaxed and comfortable environment which means they enjoy coming and stops loneliness.”**



Kelso Mens Shed Sign

Age Scotland funded a dust extraction unit to prevent shedders breathing in fine wood dust. We also funded a Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) kit to ensure the tools and equipment they use, and pass on to others, are electrically safe. They will also support other men's sheds in the Borders with the safety of their portable electric appliances.

The shed is well equipped with tools, furniture and a townscape mural made available when the old Kelso High was replaced with a new school. Eildon Housing, the Selkirk-based housing association, donated cupboards and four computers.

Eildon Housing, along with Scottish Borders Council (SBC), NHS Borders, Berwickshire Housing Association (BHA), Scottish Borders Housing Association (SBHA), Waverley Housing, and Volunteer Centre Borders (VCB), have backed the Borders Men's Shed Development Officer Ross Hall to support and enable existing and developing sheds. There are currently 10 sheds at varying degrees of development across the area with nearly 500 members. Other sheds are at Eyemouth, Coldstream, Duns, Galashiels, Selkirk, Hawick, Jedburgh, Lauder and Peebles.



**Kelso Men's Shed.** 26-38 Roxburgh Street, Kelso, TD5 7DH. Contact: **John Bassett**  
Email: **kelsomensshed@gmail.com**

**Daytime opening:**  
Tue - Fri 10 am – 4 pm  
Sat 9 am – 12 pm

**Evening opening:**  
Tue 7pm – 9 pm  
Thu 6:30 - 8:30 pm



Marion who took part in knitting with the Falkirk Libraries | Hats, Hats, Hats

## THANK YOU: The Big Knit

### This year's Big Knit campaign was bigger than ever!

From unicorns to Christmas puddings and not forgetting the classic bobble hats, the year long campaign saw our fundraiser Stacey Kitzinger and Big Knit volunteer Mhairi MacDonald in constant delight at receiving bags of little woollen creations.

We received hats from knitters and groups not only from across Scotland, but as far as Spain and Turkey.

The amazing efforts of everyone involved allowed us to achieve a total of 56,714 hats!

Hats will be paired with Innocent smoothie bottles and go on sale in shops in October. For every bottle sold Age Scotland receives a donation from Innocent, allowing us to continue to provide our vital services and remain a voice for older people across Scotland.

We've highlighted just a few of the wonderful groups and individuals that took part in this year's campaign. We're so grateful for every single person who got involved and took the time to hand-make these wonderful little hats. Thank You!

**Forever Young:** A member group based in Renfrewshire knitted 4,700 hats. A sheltered housing group that does a wide variety of activities such as keep fit, coffee mornings and, of course, knitting! Residents have been meeting over a cup of coffee and nattering away while creating some beautiful styles.

**Falkirk Community Trust Home Library Service:** The service delivers books, audio books and large print materials to any person living in Falkirk who is unable, for whatever reason, to go to one of their eight libraries. The service promoted the Big Knit to their users and at the end of the campaign we received nearly 1,270 little hats of all shapes and sizes.

**The Strath Sunshine Club in Aviemore** have knitted 1,500 fabulous hats. Members come from across Strathspey to the club, which meets every 2nd Monday for a variety of activities, including knitting.

Our supporter **Carra Galbraith** who supports us all the way from Turkey. Carra has knitted 205 little hats from her home, sending them onto the charity when she comes home to Scotland to visit family.

Other superstars are attendees of the **Anna District and Day Centre** who knitted an incredible 7,224 hats as part of the campaign and **The North Berwick Day Centre** who knitted almost 6,431.



Eilidh Cameron set to abseil the Forth Rail Bridge | Scott completed six challenges | Grace Pow running the Edinburgh Marathon

## THANK YOU: Our Supporters

**This year our fantastic supporters have been doing a variety of challenges and events to raise vital funds for Age Scotland.** From abseiling off the iconic Forth Rail Bridge to running the Edinburgh Marathon; students taking on a year long programme of events to one man completing a very personal and special summer long challenge.

Without supporters of all kinds, our work simply would not be possible. For our supporters who take on events, their dedication, commitment and enthusiasm for the challenge they take on is an inspiration... and that's before the fundraising starts!

We'd like to take this opportunity to say a HUGE thank you to everyone who supports us and highlight just a few of the wonderful ways that they have.

### Forth Rail Bridge Abseil:

In July, nine brave souls took on the challenge of abseiling off the Forth Rail Bridge. One of those was Eilidh Cameron who raised a fantastic £400 for the charity. As well as fundraising Eilidh also raised vital awareness of the charity and its' services. Currently caring for her mum and previously for her grandparents, Eilidh was previously unaware of the services Age Scotland offer that could have helped her and her family. She wanted to do her part in making sure that others are aware of how we can help so that other families can get the support they need.

### Edinburgh Marathon Festival:

This year saw our youngest ever marathon runner, 18 year old Grace Pow take on the Edinburgh Marathon and raise a whopping £1,560 for the charity! Grace was supporting the charity after witnessing her nana experiencing loneliness and feeling scared living on her own in Luton, before her family moved her up to Scotland to live with them. Grace has also taken on work experience in a number of care homes and has seen firsthand the impact loneliness can have.

Alongside our youngest runner, we also had our fastest marathon runner. Adam Jack completed the marathon in an inspirational 3 hr 15, and if that wasn't enough he raised over £250 along the way. Adam witnessed the challenges faced by older people in Scotland firsthand through his grandparents and wanted to do something to help.

### Scott

This summer our inspirational supporter Scott took on a very personal summer challenge in memory of his mum Janice. Doing one challenge wasn't enough for Scott so he took on six over the summer: Tough Mudder, two 10k's, Rough Runner, Spartans race and finishing with the Scottish Half Marathon two days after the anniversary of his mum's death in September. Scott has raised over £900 and when Barclays matched his efforts it resulted in a whopping £2,000 for Age Scotland.

# Delicious nutritious frozen meals delivered directly to your home

Eating well is crucial for good health, and it is important to pick meals which are right for your diet - that is where Oakhouse Foods can help. At Oakhouse Foods, they are passionate about creating meals that are both nutritious and enjoyable to eat.

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If you have a restricted diet, then Oakhouse Foods has plenty of options such as low sugar, gluten free or low salt dishes as well as specialised pureed and soft & bite-sized meals. The Oakhouse Team can even create bespoke meal lists, whether for allergens or preference, which outlines the dishes which suits your diet; just give them a call to find out more.

Oakhouse Foods' delicious food is delivered straight to your door - and they can even put it in the freezer for you. It will typically be the same delivery driver each week, and there is always a

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# AGE SCOTLAND NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND AWARDS CEREMONY 2020

**Bringing together members for a day of discussion, networking, inspiration and celebration.**

Our previous conferences have covered a variety of themes from learning in later life to homes, health and happiness. This year's theme is inclusion and diversity. We will be exploring important ideas such as negative stereotypes of ageing, unconscious bias and the importance of inclusion and quality of life. We have some fantastic guest speakers lined up, plenty of interactive workshops planned as well as a super lunch! The afternoon will culminate in the presentation of the Age Scotland Awards to celebrate the tremendous commitment and contribution individuals and organisations make to ensuring Scotland is a good place to grow old in.

All Age Scotland members will receive a conference booking form through the post in January 2020 or you can download the form from our website in the New Year. To book your place for this fantastic day, just complete and return the registration form by Wednesday 4th March 2020.

We hope to see you there!



## Nominations now open!

If you know an individual, group or service that is improving the lives of older people and deserves recognition, nominate them today for an Age Scotland Award! We know that there are people across Scotland doing great things in their communities and they should be celebrated. This year we have five categories; Volunteer of the Year, Member Group of the Year, Best Partnership Working, Service for Older People Award and Campaigning and Influencing Award.

**The deadline for nominations is Friday 29 November.**



## SAVE THE DATE!

### WED 25 MARCH

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Tamson's Bairns**

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Matters in Scotland

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**Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm**