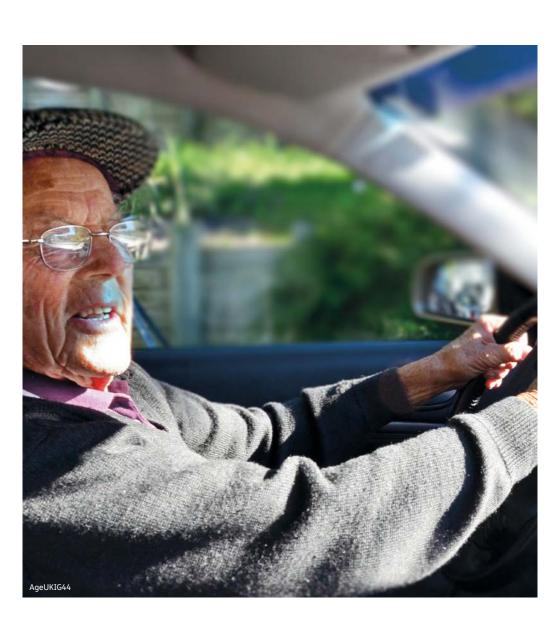
In the driving seat



What you need to know to stay driving safely for longer



Information and advice you need to help you love later life.

We're Age UK and our goal is to enable older people to love later life.

We are passionate about affirming that your later years can be fulfilling years. Whether you're enjoying your later life or going through tough times, we're here to help you make the best of your life.

Our network includes Age Cymru, Age NI, Age Scotland, Age International and more than 130 local partners.

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What this guide is about

Many of us enjoy the freedom and independence that driving gives us, and we don't want to give it up.

Although your licence entitlement expires when you turn 70, this doesn't automatically mean you have to stop driving you'll just need to apply to renew it every three years.

However, some medical conditions can affect your driving ability, and you must report relevant conditions to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) – or Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) in Northern Ireland – whatever your age.

This guide covers your legal obligations, and gives information about declaring medical conditions, tips and adaptations to help you drive safely, and advice on how to decide if it's time to stop and find alternative ways to get out and about.

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

Key



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

Renewing your licence from age 70

If you have a photocard licence, you'll be used to renewing your licence every ten years. However, once you reach 70, everyone needs to renew their licence and then do it again every three years, all free of charge. If your licence expires and you don't apply for a new one, you won't legally be allowed to drive.

Renew by post

The DVLA should send you a D46P application form 90 days before your 70th birthday, which you'll need to complete and return. If you don't receive a D46P form, you can use the D1 application for a driving licence form, which you can collect from a post office or order online from GOV.UK

If you already have a photocard licence send a new passport-type photo with your application. If you have a paper licence, send a recent passport-type photo.

Renew online

You can renew your licence online at www.gov.uk/renew-driving-licence-at-70 When you register, you'll be given a user ID code and step-by-step instructions.

in Northern Ireland, once you're aged 60 or over and you apply to renew your licence, it will be issued for a period ending on your 70th birthday, or for no less than three years. You'll then need to apply to the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) to renew it. The DVA should send you a DL1R application form around two months before your licence expires. If you don't receive one call the DVA form ordering service (page 23).

Declaring medical conditions

You have a legal duty to declare any notifiable medical conditions when filling in the form to renew your licence and to confirm whether you can meet the eyesight standards for driving. See pages 5-6 for more information.

What happens next?

The DVLA might send you a letter stating that you can continue to drive as before, or a temporary driving licence to use during a mobility centre driving assessment (see pages 8-9). You should get rid of your expired licence and keep your new one safe.

For more information

Visit www.gov.uk/renew-driving-licence-at-70. See www. nidirect.gov.uk/articles/renew-your-driving-licence in Northern Ireland. Contact Alzheimer's Society or Alzheimer Scotland for more information about driving and dementia (page 22).

You have a legal duty to declare any notifiable medical conditions when filling in the form to renew your licence.

Declaring health conditions

If you've developed a medical condition or disability that could affect your ability to drive safely, it's your legal duty to tell the DVLA (or the DVA in Northern Ireland), even if you aren't due to renew your licence yet. This also applies if a condition has worsened since your licence was issued.

You can be fined if you don't tell declare a medical condition that affects your driving. If you have an accident where your health condition may have been a factor, you could be prosecuted and your insurance might not cover you.

You may worry that if you tell the DVLA or DVA about your medical condition or disability you'll be forced to stop driving, but having a relevant medical condition doesn't always mean that your licence will be taken away.

Some of the medical conditions that you must declare are:

- dementia
- insulin-treated diabetes
- Parkinson's disease
- epilepsy
- a chronic neurological condition, such as multiple sclerosis
- a condition that affects both eyes, or total loss of sight in one eye.

You may need to declare other health conditions, depending on what kind of licence you have and how the condition affects you. If you're unsure, ask your doctor or other health professional for advice.

For a full list of medical conditions and disabilities you must declare, visit 'Check if a health condition affects your driving' on GOV.UK In Northern Ireland, contact the DVA (page 23).

How your licence may be affected

After you have told the DVLA or DVA about a medical condition, it may make a decision based on the information you provide. However if it requires more information it may contact your GP or consultant (with your permission) or arrange for a doctor or specialist to examine you. It may also ask you to take a driving assessment (see pages 8-9), evesight check or driving appraisal.

You may be able to keep your licence or get a new one, or you may be issued with a driving licence for one, two or three years and then have it reviewed after this period. The DVLA or DVA can also issue you with a licence that states that adaptations need to be fitted to your vehicle to enable you to drive with your disability (see 'Adapting your car' on pages 12-13). If its medical enquiries confirm you are not fit to drive the DVLA or DVA can tell you to stop driving.

Tell your insurance provider about any changes to your driving licence or adaptations to your car immediately. Failure to do so could result in a fine and your policy being void.

For more information

To find out more call the DVLA (page 23) or the DVA in Northern Ireland (page 23).



Once you reach 70, **everyone needs to renew their licence** and then do it again every three years, all free of charge.

Reassessing your driving ability

If you've developed a medical condition, you may need to have your driving ability assessed at a mobility centre. Or you may decide yourself that you could benefit from a driving assessment.

Mobility centre driving assessments

Mobility centres have trained staff who can assess how your condition or disability affects your driving and look at what can help, including adaptations that could help you keep driving safely.

The DVLA can refer you to a mobility centre but there may be a long wait. If you're having your driving ability reassessed due to a medical condition, ask your doctor if you can continue to drive during this time.

take one after you've declared a medical condition, but otherwise you will need to pay for it yourself – the cost varies depending on the centre. In Northern Ireland assessments are carried out at the charity Disability Action's mobility centre (page 22). In Scotland, assessment is free under the NHS if you are referred.

The DVLA funds the assessment if it has asked you to

The driving ability assessment includes:

- physical assessment to see if you can move your arms and legs easily and operate a car's pedals and other controls
- cognitive assessment to check your thinking skills
- visual assessment to check your eyesight
- an on-road driving assessment in a dual-controlled car.

The assessor will also look at your posture and strength at the wheel, and decide if any adaptations could help you get in and out of your car and drive more easily and safely. After the assessment, the assessor will help you to plan any changes you need.

The car adaptations assessment gives you a chance to try out different types of adaptations to see how they suit you. These vary depending on your needs, but can include hand controls instead of foot pedals, switches for the secondary controls such as windscreen wipers and pedal extensions. For more information about adaptations and how to fund them, see 'Adapting your car' on pages 12-13.

Outcomes of the assessment

If the assessment shows that a medical condition makes it unsafe for you to drive, the DVLA or DVA can tell you to stop driving until your condition improves. The licensing body will provide you with a medical explanation and, if possible, state when you should reapply. If and when you do reapply, talk to your doctor as you will be asked to provide medical evidence showing your condition has improved.

If you are told to stop driving altogether, you'll be given details of your right to appeal to a magistrates' court, or in Scotland to a sheriff court.

Let your insurance provider know if you stop driving. If you're stopping driving temporarily because of a health condition, the provider may be able to suspend your insurance rather than cancel it.

Who to contact

To find your nearest mobility centre, contact Driving Mobility (page 23).

Driving safely

In general older drivers are a safe group on the roads, as experience tends to balance out issues such as slower reactions or stiffness in the joints. But even if you've been driving for years or consider yourself to be experienced, always consider whether you're driving safely.

If you're worried that you're no longer safe on the roads, consider having your driving ability reassessed or looking at alternatives to driving (see pages 18-20).

Sight, hearing and medicines

Get your eyes tested every two years (or more often if advised) and your hearing checked frequently.

If you're prescribed glasses or contact lenses to drive the code 01 will be added to the back of your photocard licence. Legally, you must be able to read a number plate from a distance of 20 metres (67 feet) in order to drive. If you have an accident and you don't meet the legal standards of vision for driving you may be fined or prosecuted and your insurance might not cover you.

Many medicines can affect driving ability. Ask your doctor or pharmacist whether drowsiness is a side effect of any medicines you take and whether you can continue to drive.

Night driving and dazzle

Driving at night can be a concern, as dazzle and a feeling of not having full vision can be stressful. One tip for driving at night is to keep your eyes moving. By scanning and not keeping focused on the middle of the area illuminated by your headlights, you'll see lights around bends or at upcoming junctions to give you an idea of the road ahead.

If the lights of an oncoming vehicle dazzle you, try not to panic. Glance down toward the left side of the road to avoid being blinded. You should be able to see the edge of the road or the painted edge line, which will help you keep your path until the vehicle passes.

Your car

Check and service your car regularly and take it for its annual MOT test by the due date. Consider the following:

- If you bought your car some time ago, is it still suitable for your needs?
- Could you choose an automatic car, or one with power steering, parking sensors and cameras, blind spot mirrors or bigger windows?
- Could some adaptations to your car help? See page 12-13 for more information.

Your confidence and knowledge

If you change your car, for example from a manual to an automatic, consider having a driver assessment or driver training in your new car. This also applies if you're still able to drive but want to feel more confident on the roads, or if you would like an independent assessment of your driving skills.

Many local councils offer refresher driver training. Search for schemes near you on the website of Older Drivers (page 25) or contact IAM RoadSmart (page 23).

The Highway Code may have changed since you passed your test. Find a copy on GOV.UK, on NI Direct in Northern Ireland, or buy one from a bookshop.

For more information

See the free guide from Research Institute for Disabled Consumers (RiDC), *Driving safely for life* (page 25) or visit Older Drivers (page 25).

Adapting your car

If you have a medical condition or disability that makes it difficult to drive or get in and out of your car, a mobility centre should be able to help you decide on adaptations that are right for you. Contact Driving Mobility to find a local mobility centre that can offer advice on suitable vehicles and adaptations, and help you return to driving after an illness (page 23).

There is a range of specialist equipment available including:

- car key holders
- hoists to lift you and your wheelchair
- cushions or swivel seats to help you get in and out.

It's sometimes possible to make modifications to car doors and seats. Contact Driving Mobility, Motability or the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers (RiDC) to find out what's available (pages 23-25). Let your insurance provider know if you make any adaptations to your car.

Motability scheme

If you're receiving the higher rate of the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), the enhanced mobility component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), or the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement, you can lease a car, wheelchair or scooter at an affordable price through the Motability Scheme, run by the charity Motability (page 24).

Through this scheme you use your mobility allowance to pay for the hire of the car. You may also get VAT relief on the cost of leasing and adapting it. Motability holds open days called One Big Day around the country – call the helpline to find one near you (page 24). If you've applied for funding through the Motability Scheme and are thinking about hiring through a dealer, consider having an assessment at a mobility centre as staff can give you impartial advice.

You may also be able to get funding for cars or adaptations from other sources. For more information, contact the Disabled Living Foundation (page 22).

If your car is an old model, think about upgrading to a newer one. Newer models tend to have helpful safety features such as power steering, parking sensors and anti-lock braking. In some cases, these features can be added to existing cars. Consider whether you would find an automatic car easier to handle than a manual one.

For more information

Order the guide from the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers (RiDC), *Choosing a car* (page 25).

A mobility centre should be able to help you decide on adaptations that are right for you.

My story

'Motability has really helped me – they helped me work out what adaptations I'd need and met half the costs.'

Henry, 89, had his car adapted to help him drive despite his mobility problems.

'I passed my driving test in 1946. My daughters and granddaughter live quite far away, so it's important for me to drive. In the winter I just use my car to go shopping, but every Sunday in the summer I go to Southport to meet up with family and to hear the brass band in the park.

'I can't walk very far and I'm recovering from a couple of bad falls. I was sent to a physio who really helped me, and my GP said it was OK for me to carry on driving.

'I was injured during the war and have a replacement knee, so I receive the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement. I've always used automatic gears but five years ago I approached the Motability Scheme and I now lease a car from them. It's been adapted with an automatic gear change and a hoist at the back so I can get my scooter in. Motability has really helped me - they helped me work out what adaptations I'd need and met half the costs, and they cover my tax and insurance. My only expense is petrol, although that's quite a big cost these days!

'I don't know if I'll still be driving in a few years' time. If my GP is worried about it, I'll stop.'



The Blue Badge scheme

The Blue Badge scheme helps you park nearer to your destination if you or your passenger has severe mobility problems. It gives you exemption from some parking restrictions and access to designated parking spaces. In 2019, the scheme will be extended to people with 'hidden' disabilities, such as mental health conditions.

The scheme operates differently in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and is managed by local councils. In England and Wales, Blue Badge holders are exempt from certain parking restrictions, including being allowed to park:

- free of charge at on-street parking meters and in Pay and Display bays
- on single or double yellow lines for up to three hours, except where there is a ban on loading or unloading.

Some local councils put additional restrictions on Blue Badge holders. Check with the council in the area you're travelling to find out the rules. The scheme doesn't apply in certain boroughs in London, which offer their own parking concessions.

To do next

Apply for or renew a Blue Badge online (pages 23-25 for government website details) or contact your local council for an application form.

For more information

Contact your local council or download *The Blue Badge scheme: rights and responsibilities in England* from GOV.UK Download the Welsh version from www. gov.wales and the Scottish version from mygov.scot In Northern Ireland, find information on NI Direct (pages 23-25).

Deciding to stop driving

If you think your driving ability has deteriorated or your reactions aren't as sharp as they used to be, your driving could be putting yourself and others in danger. It might be time to consider stopping.

You must stop driving immediately if you have been advised to do so by the DVLA/DVA or your doctor. If you've not been told to stop but someone close to you thinks you should, ask them to explain why, and try to put your feelings aside.

You could also get a second opinion from someone you trust. Consult your doctor, or get an assessment of your driving skills (pages 8-9).

If you're considering giving up driving, you may be concerned about the costs or inconvenience of using public transport. But if you add up the amount you spend on car tax, insurance, maintenance and fuel in a year you will probably find that using public transport works out the same as, or less expensive than, running a car. Some public transport is free and there are many discounts available for those aged 60 and over (see pages 18-20).

For more information

The website Older Drivers (page 25) includes a calculator to help you estimate the costs of running your car compared to alternative methods of transport.

Other ways to get about

Stopping driving doesn't have to result in losing your independence. There are a number of alternative modes of transport and ways of keeping in touch.

Travel by bus

- In England, older people and disabled people are entitled to a bus pass for free off-peak bus travel on local buses anywhere in England. Qualification is based on the female State Pension age, but can vary locally. For example, if you live in London, once you're 60 you can apply for a Freedom Pass for free travel at any time of day on the tube, bus, tram and the Docklands Light Railway.
- In Northern Ireland you can get a 60+ Smartpass offering free travel on buses and trains in Northern Ireland if you're aged 60 to 64. At 65 you can get a Senior SmartPass, which allows free travel throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
- In Scotland, people aged 60 and over are entitled to free local bus and long-distance coach travel. Companion cards also give free travel to someone travelling with you.
- In Wales, people aged 60 or over and disabled people are entitled to a free bus pass for free travel on local buses at any time of day anywhere in Wales. If you're disabled and need help to travel you can request a 'companion pass'. In some rural areas where bus services are limited, the travel pass can be used on certain rail services.

Travel by coach

- National Express offers a Senior Coachcard for people who are over 60.
- If you're registered as disabled you can buy a Disabled Coachcard, which will give you the same savings. Contact National Express for more information (page 24).

There's currently no national concessionary scheme for coach travel but ask your local coach operator if they offer discounts. In Scotland, people over 60 can use National Entitlement Card for free coach travel on most journeys. Visit Transport Scotland for more information (page 26).

Travel by train

- If you're over 60, you can buy a Senior Railcard, giving you a third off rail fares (page 26). You can buy one valid for one year or three years.
- If you receive disability benefits or are registered deaf or visually impaired, you can apply for a Disabled Persons Railcard, giving you and a companion travel discounts (page 22).
- Find out if your local council offers a concessionary travel scheme, or contact your local council's concessionary travel office or National Rail (page 24).
- If you have mobility problems and would like help, let the staff at the railway station know in advance. Visit www. disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk/travel-assistance for more information.

Taxi services

- You can set up an account with a reputable taxi or private hire car company. Ask for a regular driver and if they will give you a discount if you use the company regularly.
- Some local councils offer taxi token schemes for heavily discounted taxi travel if you are of State Pension age and can't use the bus.
- There's a growing variety of ride hailing services operated via a mobile phone app, which allow you to use hail a ride and pay through your mobile phone.

Community services

If using public transport is difficult, check whether there is a community bus service. In some areas there are dial-a-ride minibus services for people who have difficulty accessing public transport, or voluntary car schemes where volunteers take you to appointments, the shops or to visit friends for a reasonable cost. There are also schemes in many areas to help disabled people get to hospital appointments.

in Northern Ireland, people who find it difficult to use public transport can use the Disability Action Transport Scheme (DATS) in urban areas, and the Dial a Lift and Assisted Rural Transport Scheme in rural areas. Contact your local council to find out whether these schemes operate. Your local library may also have useful information about public transport and other transport schemes.

Mobility scooters

If you have mobility problems, you could get a mobility scooter for travelling short distances. A mobility centre may be able to give you advice and offer you an assessment to help you choose the right model. You may be able to borrow an electric wheelchair from a local NHS wheelchair service, which can be used outdoors. Anyone who needs a wheelchair should have access to a self-propelling one. Speak to your GP if you think you could benefit from this.

Using the internet to stay connected

The internet can offer convenient ways to keep in touch with family and friends, order groceries and manage your finances. If you aren't confident using the internet, ask your local Age UK if they offer training sessions (page 21) or contact Online Centres Network (page 25). Your local library might offer computer training.

Useful organisations

Age UK

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

Lines are open seven days a week from 8am to 7pm. www.ageuk.org.uk

Call Age UK Advice to find out whether there is a local Age UK near you, and to order free copies of our information guides and factsheets.

In Wales, contact **Age Cymru:** 0800 022 3444 www.agecymru.org.uk

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

In Scotland, contact **Age Scotland:** 0800 124 4222 www.agescotland.org.uk

The evidence sources used to create this guide are available on request. Contact **resources@ageuk.org.uk**

Alzheimer's Society

Offers advice, information and support to people with dementia, their families and carers through its helpline and local offices.

Helpline: 0300 222 1122 www.alzheimers.org.uk

In Scotland, contact **Alzheimer Scotland**Helpline: 0808 808 3000
www.alzscot.org

Disability Action

Charity offering a range of services for people living in Northern Ireland, including driving mobility assessments through its mobility centre.

Tel: 028 9029 7880 www.disabilityaction.org

Disabled Living Foundation

Runs an equipment demonstration centre and provides information about equipment for daily living.

Tel: 0300 999 0004 www.dlf.org.uk

Disabled Persons Railcard

Discount card for train travel for eligible people who have epilepsy, visual or hearing impairments, or receive certain disability benefits.

Tel: 0345 605 0525 www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk

Driver and Vehicle Agency Northern Ireland (DVA)

Government agency responsible for licensing and testing vehicles and drivers in Northern Ireland.

Tel: 0300 200 7861 www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/motoring

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

Government organisation responsible for issuing driving licences.

Tel: 0300 790 6801 for licence enquiries or 0300 790 6806 to report a medical condition www.gov.uk/government/organisations/driver-and-vehicle-licensing-agency

Driving Mobility

Network of organisations that offer information for disabled people on outdoor mobility. There are 20 main mobility assessment centres in the UK and number of local centres.

Tel: 0800 559 3636 www.drivingmobility.org.uk

GOV.UK

Website with details of government services and information. Includes information about driving licences.

www.gov.uk www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge to apply for or renew a Blue Badge.

IAM RoadSmart

Road safety charity offering mature driver programmes and an advanced driving test.

Tel: 0300 303 1134 www.iamroadsmart.com

Motability

Enables disabled people to exchange their Higher Rate Mobility Component of DLA, Enhanced Rate of the Mobility Component of PIP or War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement to obtain a new car, powered wheelchair or scooter.

Tel: 0300 456 4566

Textphone: 0300 037 0100 www.motability.co.uk

National Express

National organisation for coach travel across the UK. Book tickets for coach journeys online or over the phone and find out about Senior and Disabled Coachcards.

Tel: 0871 781 8181

www.nationalexpress.com

National Rail Enquiries

Gives details of train timetables and tickets. You can book tickets for train journeys through the website.

Tel: 03457 48 49 50 www.nationalrail.co.uk

NI Direct

Government website that includes information about driving.

Tel: 0300 200 7818 (Blue Badge Unit)

www.nidirect.gov.uk

www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/apply-or-renew-blue-badge-

online to apply for or renew a Blue Badge.

Older Drivers

Website of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) giving advice for older drivers to help them drive safely for longer.

www.olderdrivers.org.uk

Online Centres Network

Network of local centres helping people to master basic computer and internet skills.

Tel: 0114 349 1666

www.onlinecentresnetwork.org

Research Institute for Disabled Consumers (RiDC)

Research charity publishing independent reviews of equipment for older and disabled people.

Tel: 020 7427 2460 www.ridc.org.uk

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)

Charity providing advice about road safety and accident prevention. Offers experienced driver assessments.

Tel: 0121 248 2000 www.rospa.com

Scottish Government

Provides information on a variety of subjects and services, including public transport and the Blue Badge Scheme in Scotland.

www.mygov.scot www.mygov.scot/apply-blue-badge to apply for or renew a Blue Badge.

Senior Railcard

Discount card for train travel for over-60s. You can visit the website or apply for one at any mainline railway station.

Tel: 0345 3000 250 www.senior-railcard.co.uk

Transport Scotland

For information about travel option in Scotland.

www.transport.gov.scot

Welsh Government

Provides information on a variety of subjects and services, including the concessionary bus pass and Blue Badge Scheme in Wales.

Tel: 0300 060 4400 www.gov.wales www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge to apply for or renew a Blue Badge.

Can you help Age UK?



If you would like to, please complete the donation form below with a gift and return to: **Freepost Age UK REPLY**. 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.

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[†] We, includes the charity, its charitable and trading subsidiaries, and national charities (Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age NI). 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 Tavis House, 1–6 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9NA. **Age UK provides a range of services and your gift will go wherever the need is the greatest.**

Supporting the work of Age UK

Age UK aims to enable all older people to love later life. We provide vital services, support, information and advice to thousands of older people across the UK.

In order to offer free information guides like this one, Age UK relies on the generosity of its supporters. If you would like to help us, here are a few ways you could get involved:

1

Make a donation

To make a donation to Age UK, simply complete the enclosed donation form, call us on **0800 169 8787** or visit **www.ageuk.org.uk/get-involved**

2

Donate items to our shops

By donating an unwanted item to one of our shops, you can help generate vital funds to support our work. To find your nearest Age UK shop, visit **www.ageuk.org.uk** and enter your postcode into the 'What does Age UK do in your area?' search function. Alternatively, call us on **0800 169 8787**

3

Leave a gift in your will

Nearly half the money we receive from supporters come from gifts left in wills. To find out more about how you could help in this way, please call the Age UK legacy team on **020 3033 1421** or email **legacies@ageuk.org.uk**



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/travelandlifestyle**

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



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 are not in the box below, call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65**.