

Update

*The latest on what you
have helped us achieve*



May 2021

Welcome to your May Update newsletter.

Helping older people through a hard winter

It's with a sense of renewed hope and gratitude that we move into spring. Thanks to our supporters, we were there to support older people through a challenging winter

We knew the UK's third lockdown would be particularly difficult for older people, especially as it took place during the coldest, darkest months. That's why, with our supporters behind us, we stepped up to provide support and friendship to those most in need.

81-year-old widower Beryl was feeling lonelier than ever. "It's just so sad," she told us a few weeks into the lockdown as case numbers rose day by day. "I often sit here and think 'God, what's going to happen to me?'"

Thankfully, regular friendship calls gave Beryl hope on even the bleakest days. "Whenever I put the phone down after a call with my Age UK befriender Rebecca, I feel so much better. It goes such a long way," Beryl explained.

For many older people, our services have been a lifeline during the pandemic - and that is down to the continued kindness of our supporters. Thank you for helping us be there.



While Beryl is looking forward to the summer and spending more time with her friends now she's been vaccinated, she'll never forget the support she got from Rebecca over the past winter. "I wish there were more people in this world like Rebecca, she puts the sparkle and the shine in your life. She's the angel on my shoulder."

Thank you for helping us to be there for older people

Vaccinating the nation



It's great news that millions of older people across the UK have now had at least their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccination. But can

people change their behaviour once they've had their vaccination? We asked Age UK's Dr Elizabeth Webb, who has a background in epidemiology.

How soon can I mix with others once I have had the vaccine?

It's sensible to keep the contact you have with

others outdoors where possible, and open windows, socially distance and wear a mask when this isn't possible.

Why?

After receiving your vaccine dose, it may take 2 or 3 weeks to develop immunity. Plus, we need to remember that no vaccine is 100% effective. There are still quite a lot of people with coronavirus in the UK, and it's possible you could catch it. Vaccinations will reduce transmission but not block it completely, so you can catch coronavirus after vaccination but have no symptoms and spread it to others.

Many local Age UKs have been putting on transport to help older people get to and from their vaccination appointments safely.

Lee Davies is Development Lead for Sustainable Transport at Age UK Cornwall.

“For individuals who can't get to their appointments, we've been able to bring them there and support them (in full PPE of course!). That first job has created a sense of relief and brought hope to people's lives.”



“I hope everyone gets the vaccine” - Ruth, 82

“I know how important vaccines are. In 1955, when I was 17, I caught polio. I was whisked off to an isolation hospital. Eventually, I recovered. I was very, very fortunate. It

could have been so much worse.

“When I read the news that a coronavirus vaccine was being developed, I was so pleased. Everything was so straightforward when I got mine recently. I just hope that people carry on being sensible and safe until everyone gets their vaccine.”

For more information about the coronavirus vaccine, visit ageuk.org.uk/vaccine or call the Age UK Advice Line on 0800 169 6565.

You can read more insight and analysis of the coronavirus pandemic from Dr Elizabeth Webb at ageuk.org.uk/covid-vaccine

YOUR MIND MATTERS

Mental Health Awareness Week takes place in May, so we're looking at some of the simple, effective things everyone can do to check in with their mental wellbeing.

Give your mood a boost

Helping yourself feel more positive is a great thing to do, especially when faced with tough times. Try these 5 simple ways to lift your spirits.

Keep busy

Get out in the garden, do some jobs around the house or go for a walk. The sense of a achievement from completing tasks can really give you a lift.

Talk to someone

Keep connected with other people as much as you can. A phone or video call is a great substitute for getting together face to face.

Help others

Do something kind for a friend or see about taking up volunteering. Research has shown that helping others can help us feel better.

Live in the present

It's easy to let our thoughts run away with us. If that happens, try to bring your attention back to what you can see, hear and feel right now. It's a good way of keeping calm and grounded.

For more information about how to look after your mind and mood, visit www.ageuk.org.uk/mindfulness

We also have a free guide, Your Mind Matters.

Order yours by calling the **Age UK Advice Line** on **0800 169 6565**.



Mindfulness is a way to increase your awareness of the here and now, and can help improve general wellbeing, and treat depression, anxiety disorders and chronic pain. Why not try this exercise to get you started?

- Sit in a chair with your feet on the floor. If you find that uncomfortable, lie down.
- Gently close your eyes and focus your awareness on your breath as it flows into and out of your body.
- Observe your breath without trying to alter it in any way or expecting anything special to happen. When your mind wanders, gently bring it back to the breath.
- After a few minutes, or longer if you prefer, gently open your eyes and take in your surroundings.



Top tips

Attract wildlife to your garden

Spring is well and truly here, and many of us will be enjoying getting back out in the garden. If you'd like to attract more wildlife to your garden, try these top tips.



1 Provide a source of water

If you haven't got a bird bath or small pond, a washing-up bowl set into the ground will be just as efficient and beneficial.

2 Have a 'wild corner'

Leave part of your garden uncut. This will provide shelter and a varied habitat for many animals and instead of worrying about maintenance, you can sit back and watch it flourish.

3 Use climbing plants

You can encourage climbers like ivy or jasmine to grow on garden walls as somewhere for birds to nest and to provide pollen for bees, butterflies and insects.

4 Don't waste

Cut up fruit that is too ripe and leave it in your garden instead of throwing it away. This will attract animals.



Can watching wildlife improve our wellbeing?

"There's been a lot of research on 'ecotherapies', as they're called, and how they can help people with anxiety and stress. All of the results have shown a massively positive effect. Even just listening to bird song can lower your blood pressure and calm you down. I've found myself, with grief, that being outside with nature is very beneficial."

Mark Carwardine,
zoologist and wildlife photographer

For more ideas on how to attract wildlife to your garden, visit ageuk.org.uk/wildlife

Advice when it's needed most

"People are enormously grateful to receive the advice we offer."

Kerry, Lead Adviser,
Age UK Advice Line

Thanks to our supporters, Age UK's information and advice services have provided expert support through every stage of the pandemic. Here are some of our latest achievements.

 **7 million**

In 2019/20, we reached over 7 million people with our information and advice.

 **184,305**

Between March 2020 to February 2021, we've answered 184,305 calls to the Age UK Advice Line.

Rasila's story

Rasila called the Age UK Advice Line for support with caring full-time for her older sister, who has dementia.

"The Age UK Advice Line were very, very supportive. They listened to me. They knew I was reaching breaking point, and they were very, very good.

People will normally ask how my sister is, but they never ask me how I am. Age UK did, and that meant a lot.

I got the answers that I wanted, but the best part was that Age UK phoned me back to check if I was alright. They didn't have to do it, but they have the compassion to check in on me to make sure I'm OK."



We're here for you if you ever need us

We provide the latest information and advice on all aspects of getting older, as well as tips and suggestions for supporting others. Visit the Age UK website at ageuk.org.uk or call the **Age UK Advice Line** free of charge on **0800 169 6565**. If you ever need us, we're here for you.

Thank you for helping us to be there for older people

Later Life hero

This issue's Later Life hero is Leslie, whose support for Age UK lives on after his passing.

Leslie Albert Smith was a supporter of Age UK for over 40 years, and often used our information and advice services. When Leslie wrote his will he considered which charities were important to him and decided to leave a gift in his will to Age UK. Leslie's niece Deborah lovingly spoke of her late uncle's 'strong connection to Age UK' and how he even celebrated his 90th birthday with us at the Age UK office cafe!

Kind gifts in wills like Leslie's help us to continue our vital work. From providing weekly friendship calls, to helping people access the vital advice and support they need, these special gifts provide a lifeline for those who have nowhere else to turn. That's why Leslie was, and always will be, a true Later Life Hero.



Leslie celebrating his birthday with us

Nominate a Later Life hero

We love to feature your stories of inspiring older people in this newsletter. Perhaps they've done something amazing in their community, or maybe they've got an awe-inspiring talent. If you know someone who you'd like to celebrate, we'd love to hear about them!

Simply write to Rebecca Alton at Age UK, Tavis House, 1-6 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9NA or email supporters@ageuk.org.uk and include Later life hero in the subject line.



The Big Knit

Download the new innocent Big Knit knitting patterns and help us be there for older people who are most in need.

Age UK works in partnership with innocent drinks to ask knitters of all abilities to knit (or crochet!) little woolly hats. These hats are then placed on to innocent smoothie bottles in shops, and for every smoothie sold, innocent makes a donation to Age UK.

Once your hats are ready, you can drop them at your nearest local Age UK or send them to us at Age UK, The Big Knit, Fruit Towers, 342 Ladbroke Grove, London W10 5BU.

The closing date for hats is 1 October 2021.



To find out more and to check out our new knitting patterns, visit ageuk.org.uk/the-big-knit

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