

Independent Age Written Submission to APPG portal

We are a national charity who listen to, and amplify the voices of, people in later life who have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

At Independent Age, we have seen how the COVID-19 virus outbreak has significantly impacted people in later life, due to the effect the virus has had on them physically, alongside the impact of the measures put in place to tackle it. During the pandemic we have listened to the experiences of people aged over 65.

While there have been many positive initiatives across the country in response to the outbreak, we have also been hearing and seeing the negative impact on people in later life, their families and friends.

Our key concerns include:

- Inequalities and ageism in the health sector being exacerbated by the response to the pandemic – for example older people being given DNACPR and intensive care decisions support tools which unfairly weight age
- People in the social care system being abandoned – the social care system has not been given the same protection as the NHS. This has resulted in many people not receiving the care they needed, and more pressure on family carers.
- People's struggles to access the food they need – we did a survey of almost 2000 people to inform our response to the EFRA committee, and we continue to work closely with DERA on this issue to ensure people have the information and support they need
- The guidance for the clinically vulnerable group being unclear – terms like 'take particular care' have been confusing for people. Our nationally representative polling of adults over 65 found that 43% of people incorrectly believed that the government had instructed over-70s without any underlying health conditions to shield themselves by not leaving the house. We worry this could mean that many healthy over 70s shielded unnecessarily, which could have resulted in increased isolation and loneliness.
- The experience of partner bereavement and the resulting complex grief – we estimate that up to 85,000 people over aged 65 and over may have suffered the death of a partner since the start of the COVID-19 lockdown, which is almost one and a half times as many as in the same period in each of the five previous years. Due to the impact of the outbreak, and the measures put in place to tackle it, we believe that at least 6000 of those people in later life who have been bereaved are likely to go on to develop complicated grief. This is prolonged period of acute grief which occurs when the 'normal' grieving process is interrupted.
- The increase of common mental health problems such as anxiety and depression – people in later life are often overlooked when it comes to mental health support and we are concerned that they could need this support now more than ever.

Since the start of the pandemic we have been amplifying the voices of people in later life from different walks of life through our Home Truths blog series, committee evidence submissions and in meeting with Government departments. We would welcome any

opportunity to submit evidence or share the key concerns of people in later life with the committee over the coming months.

Our Home Truths series - <https://www.independentage.org/hometruths-listing>