

Don't miss out on the Winter Fuel Payment



You may have heard that there have recently been changes to the eligibility criteria to qualify for the **Winter Fuel Payment**. This means that now, in order to qualify for the payment, people need to be in receipt of **Pension Credit**. It is estimated that over 800,000 people who are entitled to the benefit are not claiming it, meaning they miss out on other benefits and support.

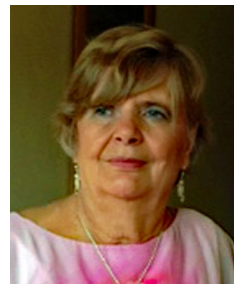
We are therefore strongly recommending that older Solihull residents get a **benefits check** to see if they are eligible for Pension Credit, or other benefits which may entitle them to the Winter Fuel Payment.

The deadline to apply for the Winter Fuel Payment is **21 December**, so residents should apply for Pension Credit before then.

We are holding several **Pension Credit Events** where we will offer **benefits checks** and **support with applications**. The events will take place from **1.30-4.00pm** on the **Lower Ground Floor of The Core**, Solihull, on **11, 12, 14, 15, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 November**, and **2, 3, 4, 5,** and **6 December**.

To **book** onto one of the events, or if you have any worries about **keeping warm** this winter, please call our **Winter Warmth** line on **0121 704 8080**. This service is primarily aimed at **older people**, those living with **disabilities** or **long-term health conditions**, **carers**, and **families** with young children. We are **here to help**.

Hazel's story



"If it was not for a neighbour, I would still be struggling to regain my freedom. About ten years ago I tried to get a **Blue Badge**, but was rejected. Now thanks to Age UK Solihull, I no longer go home empty handed as I can park outside the shops.

I injured my back as a child and developed severe scoliosis. I spent 18 months in hospital and needed a major operation taking bone from my leg to graft into my spine. If anyone told me I could not do anything, I went out of my way to achieve it. I have been **skiing, hill climbing**, and, most importantly, **I worked!** It was something I was told I never would be able to do. As a **journalist** there was not much sitting still so it suited me fine. Now at 76, my right leg from which the bone graft was taken drags, and because my back is basically one solid bone I do not have much counter balance so I sometimes fall.

Thanks to my neighbour's suggestion I **contacted Age UK Solihull** about a **Blue Badge**. I am too independent to admit to my failing abilities, but the **kindness and professionalism** of advisers, who not only filled out my form for the **Blue Badge**, but also suggested I apply for **Attendance Allowance**, was amazing. They **gently** got me to admit to my limitations.

Words cannot express how much Age UK Solihull and its

advisers have **changed my life**. Their suggestions were never intrusive, but **supportive** with one aim in mind – to help to **make my life easier**. A life which has been difficult since my husband's death five years ago.

Can you imagine someone smiling because the stairs have been vacuumed cleaned!! That small thing which might seem insignificant is amazing to me and it is all thanks to Age UK Solihull. I never thought I would need Age UK, after all I am an independent, professional person who has navigated the minefield that is life, but this organisation is **so special** and its people offer **outstanding help and support**.

I have learned my lesson – there is little point in struggling if you can ask for help, especially if it is from Age UK Solihull. I have promised my neighbour an afternoon out at a garden centre with cream tea as a thank you and I will be parking right outside the front door!

Thank you, Hazel, for sharing your story. We're so pleased to have been able to help make life easier for you.

If like Hazel you need help with a **Blue Badge** application, benefits advice, or anything else, don't suffer alone. Contact our **Older People's Information and Advice** team on **0121 704 7840** or **info@ageuksolihull.org.uk**.

Festive Fundraising

We have been busy planning this year's festive fundraising activity. Here is what's coming up:

Giving Tuesday Tuesday 3 Dec. Give something to a cause that's important to you, whether it's time, money, a service or an item.

Carol Singing Saturday 14 Dec. Carols from local choirs in Touchwood and on the High Street. Volunteers needed to collect donations - can you help?

Contact our **Fundraising team** for more details: **0121 704 7842 | fundraising@ageuksolihull.org.uk**

Santa Collections 12 and 17 Dec. We're joining Shirley Lions to collect donations and spread festive cheer around the streets of Shirley with Santa and his sleigh. Volunteers needed on both evenings.

Christmas Raffle Lots of brilliant prizes to be won, including a Fortnum and Mason hamper, an air fryer and a Christmas turkey. Draw is on **12 Dec**.



Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the recent support we have received from organisations and members of the community:

Abbott Medical
Adlington Farm
AD Concert Band
Asda Chelmsley Wood
Asda Shirley
Avery Healthcare
Baron Davenport's Charity
Belmont Healthcare
Blossomfield Grange Care Home
Chiltern Railways

Damson Wood Infant School
Dunelm
Eastcote Park Retirement Village and Care Home
Energy One
(The) Entertainer
(The) Goodenough Charity
IMI Plc
Johnsons Coach Travel

Kineton Green Primary School
Knowle & Dorridge Lions
Macc Care
Marston Green Infant Academy
McCarthy Stone
National Gas Metering
Nicky Robinson
Personal Exercise
Pop Voices Choir

Provincial Grand Lodge of Warwickshire
(The) Regency Hotel
Rotary Club of Knowle & Dorridge
Saxon Court Care Home
Saqib Bhatti MP
Sharmans Cross Junior School
Shirley Lions
Spartan Direct

St Alphege Infant and Junior Schools
Tesco Shirley Touchwood
Tudor Grange Leisure Centre
Tudor Grange Primary Academy Yew Tree
Ukelele Central
Werthers
Yvonne Rogers

Age UK Solihull Services

Community Advice Hubs 0121 709 7590

Benefits Service 0121 709 7592

Home Support Service 0121 704 7848

Older People's Information & Advice
0121 704 7840

Linking People Together (Befriending) 0121 704 7846

Clubs and Activities 0121 704 7811

Postural Stability Exercise Service 0121 704 7845

Winter Warmth Helpline 0121 704 8080

Digital Champion Project 0121 704 7851

Stay in touch

Age UK Solihull

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Website www.ageuksolihull.org.uk

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Age UK Solihull Newsletter Issue 25 · Winter 2024



newsletter

Bluebird Care · Volunteering · Winter Warmth · 10 years of PSI · Fundraising activities

Celebrating our volunteers

We recently said a big **"thank you"** to our amazing volunteers with a **Volunteer Celebration** at The Regency Hotel.

All of our volunteers were invited to join us, along with the **Mayor of Solihull**, for **afternoon tea**, a **raffle**, and a presentation of **awards** for volunteers who have reached significant milestones - some have volunteered with us for over **25 years!**

Our volunteers are **essential** to our mission of improving the lives of older and vulnerable residents in the community. Between January and September this year, an average of **161** volunteers each month have dedicated over **10,000 hours** of their time in total, contributing more than **£130,000** in added value to the charity.

Last year, Age UK Solihull supported **7,825** Solihull residents, many of whom accessed more than one of our services. This would not have been possible without the unwavering commitment of our volunteers.

Our Volunteer Manager, Ashlee Young, said, *"It was an absolute pleasure to host this event and show our gratitude to the volunteers who are the backbone of our charity. Their dedication and compassion make a real difference to the lives of older and vulnerable people across the Solihull borough. We are incredibly proud of the 350 volunteers who give their time. We simply couldn't do what we do without them. I'd also like to extend a special thanks to The Regency Hotel for their excellent hospitality."*



Join our team



We are always in need of more volunteers to help us to be here for as many older and vulnerable Solihull residents as possible.

Drivers Take an older person or two to their weekly exercise class or social club in your car.

Club Helpers Help at our social clubs/activities.

Winter Warmth Volunteers Deliver items such as heaters and blankets to vulnerable residents.

Information Events Volunteer Help on a stand or deliver a presentation about the support we offer.

Find out more about all our volunteering roles at **www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/volunteer** or contact Ashlee on **volunteering@ageuksolihull.org.uk** or **0121 704 7843**.

We are currently looking for:

Befrienders Visit a lonely older person once a week in their home, for an hour or so.

Community Advice Hub Volunteers Welcome visitors and direct them to our Advisers at our Hub in Chelmsley Wood Library.

Local charity | Local services | Local people

Registered Charity Number: 1055887

Go to **www.ageuksolihull.org.uk** for information on our services.



Pass it on! If you have a printed version of this newsletter, don't throw it away after you've read it. Why not pass it to a friend to read or leave it somewhere in the community (but don't litter!) for someone else to find?

New activities for older people

We are thrilled to have expanded our offering of **clubs and activities** for older people in Solihull.

We recently launched **two new lunch clubs**, a **monthly coffee afternoon**, and some **one-off taster sessions**, which aim to **combat loneliness** and **promote wellbeing** among older Solihull residents.

We now have five weekly and monthly **lunch clubs** which take place at **Land Rover Social Club**, **Marston Green Tavern**, **Moseley Cricket Club** (Shirley), **Red Lion** pub (Knowle), and **Hobs Meadow** pub. We also run a monthly **coffee afternoon** at **Eastcote Park Care Home** (Barston).

Our clubs are for **older residents** of the Solihull borough, and priority is given to those who **live alone** with no family or other support nearby.

While the clubs were on a break for the summer, we took some of our members on day trips to **Webbs Garden Centre** and **Stratford-Upon-Avon** (pictured), where our club members enjoyed fish

and chips, ice cream and a boat trip!

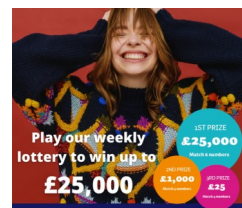
As well as our regular clubs, we have started to offer taster sessions, including cooking demonstrations and craft sessions.

Our Clubs and Activities Coordinator, Emma Hunter, says, *"We are thrilled to have launched these new activities which offer the chance for older Solihull residents to get out and socialise, meeting local people and enjoying entertainment and activities in a warm and welcoming environment. Our aim is to combat social isolation and these new clubs and events are integral to achieving that goal."*

For information about our clubs or activities, please contact Emma on **07442 859702**, email activities@ageuksolihull.org.uk or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/clubs



Play for the jackpot!



What would you do with **£25,000?**

Play our new **Weekly Lottery** and you could have the chance to find out!

For just **£1 per play**, you will be entered into our weekly draw for the chance to win cash prizes, including a huge **£25,000** jackpot!

Not only do you have the chance to win big, but by joining our Weekly Lottery, you will also be helping to raise funds to support older people in Solihull. Find out more at www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/weekly-lottery

Big Knit is back!

After a bit of a break, the **Big Knit** has returned, and it's even better!

The Big Knit is a campaign with **innocent drinks**, where our supporters knit little hats which are put on top of innocent smoothie bottles to be sold in shops. We receive **30p per hat** - an increase from 25p for previous campaigns!

Please grab your knitting needles and crochet hooks and get involved, helping to **raise funds** to help **change the way we age** here in Solihull.

Find out more and download patterns at www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/big-knit

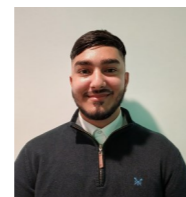


More news....

Our Chair, Sally Tomlinson, recently attended a **round table discussion** at **Rayner House Care** with Local MP **Saqib Bhatti** and former Leader of the Opposition **Rishi Sunak**, along with volunteers from other voluntary organisations. They discussed the removal of the **Winter Fuel Payment** from pensioners not in receipt of Pension Credit.



Welcome to our newest member of staff, **Hassan Raza**, who has joined our Hubs for 6 months as a **Mental Health Advisor**, working with **Oasis Mental Health Support**.



A Journey Through Time



Solihull's symphonic wind band, known as **AD Concert Band**, recently held their Autumn concert, raising funds for Age UK Solihull.

The concert, which took place at the newly refurbished **St Philip's Church** in Dorridge, featured music from a range of genres with the theme **"A Journey Through Time"**.

Thank you to AD Concert Band for helping to raise a fantastic **£449** with the concert. Thanks also to our **wonderful volunteers** (pictured) for helping the event run smoothly by supporting with front of house duties, serving refreshments and transporting the band's kit.

A pop-tastic partnership

We are super excited to have partnered with **Pop Voices Choir** for 2024/25.

The choir has already helped us **raise funds** as we have collected donations from generous audience members during their performances at **Touchwood for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**, and also at **Dorridge Day** (pictured).

Pop Voices will be performing at our **Carol Singing Day** on 14 December, and we are looking forward to planning some more musical fundraising activities with the group in 2025.

Pop Voices' leader, Anya Small, said, *"Pop Voices is proud to be partnering with Age UK Solihull. We believe in the power of music to connect people of all ages, and we're delighted to be supporting such a vital cause. Our singers are excited to be involved, and we can't wait to see what we can achieve together."*



Stepping up to the challenge

Several super supporters have recently taken on challenges in aid of Age UK Solihull....



Richard, James, Jane and Alison all took part in **Run Solihull** in August, raising over **£500** and lots of awareness for our charity.



Three volunteers, **Clare, Ian and Erin**, and **Knowle Gate Care Home's** Customer Service Manager, **Courtney**, all completed **tandem skydives** this summer, raising over **£3,250** between them.

We have more challenge events coming up. Have a look below to see if one would suit you!

Run Alton Towers 16 and 17 November
Choose from a 5k, 10, half marathon or kids race. Get free access to Alton Towers' rides after the race!

Virtual Everest Challenge 1 November
Climb the equivalent of Mount Everest in 12 weeks and receive a medal upon completion.

160ft Bungee Jump Various dates and locations available.

Tandem Skydive Look out for our next Jump Day in Spring 2025 or choose any date to suit you.

Paris Marathon 13 April 2025
Take part in one of the biggest marathons in the world.

London to Amsterdam Cycle Ride 15 May 2025
Embark on an incredible two-wheeled adventure.

These are just some of the challenges we have on offer, and we are constantly adding new ones. See a full list at www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/challenges

More news....



Meriden and Solihull East MP, **Saqib Bhatti**, is holding another **Pensioners' Fair** on **Friday 22 November** from **11.00am-1.30pm**, this time at **Onward Club**, Chelmsley Wood. Drop in to find out what support is available for older people in the Solihull borough. We are honoured to have been nominated to receive proceeds from the fair once again. Thank you, Saqib!

Thank you to the schools, businesses and individuals who took part in **Slip Into Slippers** on 1 October to mark **Older People's Day**. Over **£1,000** was raised from the event!



Want to fundraise for us? Email events@ageuksolihull.org.uk to discuss.

With thanks to our sponsor:

It's good to be home
Good Care Quality Commission

Glady's Solihull

bluebird care

We're here so your loved one can stay home, where they want to be. Where things are safe and familiar and they have the best chance to live a full and meaningful life.

Whether it's everyday companionship or everyday errands, Live-in Care or Home Care visits, our highly-trained Care Experts will give your loved one the support they need to live in the place they feel best: home.

See how we can support you.

Carers who look after everything. So you don't have to.

Call us for a friendly chat on **0121 803 6787** or visit bluebirdcare.co.uk/solihull

PSI turns 10!

We recently celebrated the 10 year anniversary of running our hugely successful **Postural Stability Instruction (PSI)** project.



Funded by **Birmingham and Solihull ICS**, PSI is the only evidence-based exercise that provides **proven outcomes** for frequent or recurrent fallers.

Our first PSI class started in July 2014. Since then, we have been able to offer over **1,630** people in Solihull a **free place** on these 20-week exercise programmes.

A significant benefit of the programme is that we offer **free transport** to clients attending the weekly exercise classes. This is possible due to having an amazing support team of over **40** PSI volunteers, who either drive clients to and from the PSI classes or offer support in the classes themselves.

The classes receive so much positive feedback from the clients who have completed the programme. Here are some comments we have received:

"One of the finest things that I have ever done and certainly gets you moving again."

"I have more confidence in my walking and my balance has improved."

"I enjoyed the classes very much and I was very grateful to the volunteer driver for picking me up every week."

"A positive and enjoyable experience due to the encouragement of smiling and welcoming staff."

Access to the service

Referrals to the PSI service need to come through a **Health professional** such as a physiotherapist or your GP. For further details, please call **0121 704 7845**, email psi@ageuksolihull.org.uk or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/psi

Please **leave a gift** to Age UK Solihull in your **Will** to help us to be here for **future generations**.

Visit www.easyfundraising.org.uk to raise money for us each time you shop online.