

Funding Application

To: Cuckfield Parish Council
Project: Keep Connected

The past 18 months has been a turbulent one for us all and in particular vulnerable older people, many of whom have found themselves dealing with extreme loneliness and isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic. At Age UK West Sussex, Brighton & Hove we have been working hard to ensure support is always there for those that need it.

Due to the pandemic, we had to temporarily shut down some of the services we usually offer, such as our clubs, cafes and other face to face services, whilst quickly adapting to enable us to help those who were struggling and needed us even more at such a critical time. We continued to offer information and advice over the and we began offering support and befriending over the phone to those facing isolation and loneliness, doorstep deliveries of essentials such as groceries, medication and meals, and practical help to the most vulnerable, such as those returning home from hospital or living with dementia.

Demand for our support increased dramatically - by over 250% during the first lockdown - with many older people asked to shield and facing what felt like endless isolation from friends and loved ones. This demand continued throughout 2020 and into the lockdown in 2021, with more than 40% of those asking for support being new to the charity.

As we now move into new stages of the pandemic, we are acutely aware of the challenges older people are facing and these are continually evolving as the situation changes. Many are now dealing with the repercussions of a decline in physical and mental wellbeing due to lockdown restrictions and those who have been isolating and shielding, some for more than a year, are extremely anxious about the impact of returning to life outside of their home as restrictions ease.

We want to continue to be there for all vulnerable older people in our local communities who need support during these extraordinary times. As we know, loneliness and isolation are key issue for older people anyway and the pandemic has only served to exacerbate this. With this in mind, we have launched our '**Keep Connected**' initiative to support older people to transition into and cope with the 'new normal' and their own changing circumstances.

**Age UK West Sussex,
Brighton & Hove**
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Our 'Keep Connected' initiative includes providing:

- Bags of Support - launched last October, the bags contain items to help provide comfort and reassurance to older people, such as re-usable face masks, hand sanitiser, information and advice including links to support services, activities to keep them busy, a few little treats to lift their spirits
- Connect Magazine – included in the Bags of Support, this magazine offers information and activities. Read our latest copy at: www.ageukwsbh.org.uk/about-us/connect-magazine/
- Befriending - the initiative also involves continuing our telephone befriending and support service, which receives no funding currently but provides a vital link to the outside world for those who are housebound or who need support or companionship. Throughout the last year, our staff and volunteers made over 400 befriending and support calls each week – now, as we roll out this service, we are recruiting more volunteers to help deliver this service as demand continues.

A donation of £200 towards our Keep Connected initiative this year, would enable us to provide essential support to around 10 - 13 local older people.

If you are able to help us with funding, you can make a donation directly to us with the reference **Keep Connected**:

CAF Bank

Account: Age UK West Sussex Brighton & Hove

Account Number: 00015311

Sort Code: 40 52 40

Or by sending a cheque to: Fundraising Team, Age UK West Sussex Brighton & Hove, Suite 2 Anchor Springs, Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN17 6BP.

Thank you for your consideration of our funding application.

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