



## **PRESS RELEASE - EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 Wednesday 20 May 2015**

### **Prime Minister urged to stick to his promises over older people**

David Cameron will need to take bolder steps than any previous leader to deal with a rapidly ageing population. And the Prime Minister and new government must deliver on its promise of security and dignity for people in retirement. That's according to an open letter to the Prime Minister signed by sixteen organisations concerned about the needs of our ageing society including the charity Independent Age, the International Longevity Centre - UK, Anchor, the National Council for Palliative Care, the United Kingdom Home Care Association and the Campaign to End Loneliness <sup>1</sup>.

By the end of this parliament one in five people will be over 65 <sup>2</sup>. The letter calls on the Prime Minister to:

- Set an ambitious agenda to help all generations get ready for ageing, including addressing the new threats of loneliness, inadequate housing and tackling a lack of proper care and support among growing numbers of older and frail people in society.
- Address the concerns of older people in getting the necessary support to remain well and independent at home.
- Action to prevent older people from requiring hospital or other forms of costlier care, in order to avoid the elderly being caught up in unnecessary A&E visits and long hospital stays.
- Have an honest debate about how the cost of living longer lives is met and building on the Secretary of State for Health's ambition, explain how the UK can become the best country in which to grow old.

Janet Morrison, Chief Executive, Independent Age, said:

"The actions of the Prime Minister now will help determine the extent to which current and future generations really have security and dignity in retirement. With one week to go until the Queen's Speech, crucial decisions are needed on health, social care, housing and other areas. Clarity on these will encourage

people to consider how they plan to fund and experience their older age and take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing as they grow older.”

David Sinclair, Director, International Longevity Centre – UK, said:

“Delivering a sustainable older society is critical for our future. Yet the UK continues to be unprepared for ageing. While the Government has recognised the importance of supporting older people today, we are lacking a coherent set of policy measures intended to address the long term challenges posed by an ageing population. It doesn’t have to be this way. With a coherent vision about how we face up to the challenge of ageing we can drive-up health and prosperity across the generations.”

### **Notes to Editors:**

#### **For media and interview requests, please call:**

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### **Notes to Editor:**

#### **<sup>1</sup> Organisations making the call to David Cameron:**

Janet Morrison - Chief Executive - Independent Age

Jane Ashcroft CBE - Chief Executive - Anchor

David Sinclair – Director - International Longevity Centre - UK

Simon Chapman - Director of Policy, Intelligence & Public Affairs - National Council for Palliative Care

Bridget Warr- Chief Executive - United Kingdom Home Care Association

Laura Alcock-Ferguson - Director - Campaign to End Loneliness

Professor Julienne Meyer CBE- Executive Director of My Home Life and Professor of Nursing at City University London- My Home Life & City University London

Gillian Crosby - Chief Executive - Centre for Policy on Ageing

Stephen Joseph - Chief Executive - Campaign for Better Transport

Sue Adams - Chief Executive - Care and Repair England

Cherry Bushell - Executive Director - NBFA Assisting the Elderly

John Galvin - Chief Executive - Elderly Accommodation Counsel

Chris Wilson - Clerk to the Trustees - Southwark Charities

Bridgit Sam-Bailey- Chair- Lewisham Pensioners Forum

Tony Tuck - Chair - Wandsworth Older Peoples' Forum

Stephen Lowe - Group External Affairs and Customer Insight Director - Just Retirement

**Full text of the letter:**

Dear Prime Minister

As organisations concerned about the needs of our ageing society, we hope to learn more about what your government will do to deliver on its promise of security and dignity for people in retirement.

With a rapidly ageing population, you will need to take bolder steps than any previous Prime Minister. Measures to reform pensions and invest in the NHS, though welcome, must only be the start. We urge an even more ambitious agenda, which includes facing the new threats of loneliness, inadequate housing and tackling a lack of proper care and support among growing numbers of the most frail and elderly in our society.

Perhaps chief among older people's concerns is getting the necessary support to remain well and independent at home. Crucially, this isn't just a priority for pensioners, but for all of Britain's families, as stretched care services tend to stretch working people's capability to care for their loved ones. 360,000 fewer older people received care and support from their council between 2008 and 2013. By the end of this parliament, 1 in 5 people will be over the age of 65.

Without concerted action to prevent older people from requiring hospital or other forms of costlier care, we risk increased numbers of people caught up in unnecessary A&E visits and long hospital stays. Older people must have decent, safe, suitable homes to enable healthy, independent living in later life.

Ultimately, to meet the needs of an ageing population, we need to have an honest debate about how we fairly meet the costs of more of us living longer lives. We would like to see you set out a clear vision, and building on the Secretary of State for Health's ambition, now explain how the UK can in fact become the best country in which to grow old.

**<sup>2</sup> ONS, Ageing in the UK Datasets 1992 – 2037, March 2015**

### **About Independent Age**

Founded over 150 years ago, Independent Age is a growing charity helping older people across the UK and Ireland through the 'ABC' of advice, befriending and campaigning. We offer a free national telephone and email advice service focusing on social care, welfare benefits and befriending services. This is supported by our free Wise Guide series of practical handbooks, and wide range of printed guides and factsheets. We also provide on-the-ground, local support, provided by a network of over 1,500 volunteers offering one-to-one and group befriending.

Independent Age produces a range of free booklets – Wise Guides, which offer helpful advice, tips, contact numbers and good ideas to help older people lead independent and fulfilling lives for as long as possible. To order a free copy now for yourself or a loved one, telephone 0800 319 6611 or visit [www.independentage.org](http://www.independentage.org)

For more information, visit our website [www.independentage.org](http://www.independentage.org)

Speak to one of our advisers for free and confidential advice and information. Lines are open Monday to Friday between 10am - 4pm. Freephone 0800 319 6789 or email [advice@independentage.org](mailto:advice@independentage.org)