

How we made a difference: 2023-24





A message from our Chair

As life expectancy continues to rise, many older people face the harsh reality of living in poverty due to financial hardship, unable to afford necessities that many of us often take for granted. Thanks to your generosity, this year we were able to provide more grants to help vulnerable older people purchase essential items such as bedding and clothing. While these grants may appear modest, they have a profound impact on those who have few other options. We are one of the few charities offering this type of support and because 100% of our grants are funded by donations, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to each and every one of our supporters. Your kindness and generosity make a remarkable difference.

We take great pride in the personalised care we offer. Your contributions this year have helped us enhance the warm, home-like environments we create in our care services, allowing older people to pursue their passions and stay connected to their communities. This level of care would not be possible without our dedicated staff. I am deeply grateful to each of them for their commitment.

Our trustees have also played a vital role in our success this year. I thank them for their dedication and hard work. On behalf of the trustees, I would also like to extend our appreciation to Steve Allen, our outgoing Chief Executive, for his decade of exceptional leadership.

I hope you enjoy reading about the difference we are making to the lives of older people, made possible through the kindness and support of individuals like you.

Chris Maidment
Chair of the Trustees

Who we are

Founded in 1905, Friends of the Elderly is one of the longest-running national charities dedicated to supporting older people. Our grants programme has been an integral part of our mission since the beginning and has developed over time in response to older peoples' changing needs.

Today, we are one of the few organisations providing small grants (normally up to £400) to older people facing financial crisis so they can afford essential items such as food, heating, disability aids and even funeral costs. We also provide high-quality, person-centred care services, including nursing, residential, dementia, and respite care across our day centres and care homes.



The impact of your support

We couldn't do what we do without the generosity of our individual donors, and the trusts and foundations, businesses and community groups that support us.

Thanks to our donors, we were able to meet the increasing demand for our service, and distribute grants to 802 older people, an increase of 39% in comparison to the previous year.



Your support in action



104 grants replaced old cookers and ovens



17 digital connection grants helped people feel less isolated in their homes



88 grants helped towards the cost of new washing machines



19 grants contributed to the funeral costs of loved ones



39 disability adaption grants increased independence



224 people and their carers were supported by our day care services



276 residents on average were cared for in our 11 care homes

Josie's story

Josie*, 71, started having trouble with her boiler during last year's freezing cold winter. She initially had to keep the boiler on constantly or it wouldn't start up again; this caused a dramatic increase in her bills. When the boiler stopped working altogether, she had to call someone out to look at it.

We provided Josie with a grant of £400 to help pay towards the replacement of her boiler and to cover the increased cost in bills she incurred. Josie told us:

“ Without your assistance I would have gone under, I had nothing from month to month. You have helped me no end. You have made me be able to afford to keep the utility bills paid and keep afloat. For some people it has become heat or eat and I would have been the same without your help. ”

*Names and photos have been changed to protect identity.

Supporting older people in financial need

We are one of the few charities that offer small grants and the impact of these cannot be overestimated. Some applicants told us that we were their last hope and that they didn't know what they would have done if we had not stepped in. Others told us how they had trouble sleeping due to all the worry and that they were now able to get a good night's rest. The grants we give may seem small to some, but the impact can be huge.



By replacing cookers, helping with heating bills, providing disability adaptations, and paying for everyday items like food and clothing, our grants can have a significant effect on quality of life. They also help to alleviate the stress and anxiety these expenses can cause, and relieve feelings of indignity and helplessness, even desperation.

We are continuously improving how we evaluate and develop our grants programme. Recently, we developed a Theory of Change which has helped us create a shared, clear understanding of the need for our service and demonstrate its longer-term impact. Information gathered so far shows that our grants are helping to reduce poverty, isolation, and loneliness and improve living standards, wellbeing, and mental health.

In our surveys of grant recipients*, we found that:



89% said the grants had made them feel less stressed, anxious or worried



90% said they felt happier



71% felt more positive about the future

*Data is being gathered on an ongoing basis. Figures correct at time of publishing in October 2024.

Small grants, big difference



Grace's story

Grace*, 72, is living with multiple health problems including lung disease, rheumatoid arthritis, and chronic back pain. Grace's lack of mobility has made her life increasingly difficult, and being more or less confined to the house has left her feeling isolated.

We provided Grace with a grant of £400 towards the cost of a mobility scooter to help her get her freedom back.

Grace told us:

“ It's made a huge difference: I feel 100% happier! I can get out and go shopping – I love getting out, getting fresh air and seeing life: it makes me feel much more connected to the outside world now, and to other people. Often I couldn't walk very far at all before the pain would start in my back and legs, and then I'd have difficulty breathing. It made it very hard to leave home, which was really isolating. ”

We gather feedback from grant recipients to monitor and evaluate the impact of our service. Here is what some of them had to say. Thank you to everyone who has shared their thoughts with us.

“ The grant has really helped because the old fridge freezer was completely broken. The door wouldn't stay on, and I was concerned it could catch fire. So, this new fridge is so much of a burden lifted as I didn't have the funds to replace it myself. Moreover, I am eating more healthily, and my food is staying fresher longer. ”

“ It meant that I could move into a more suitable home. I felt like a prisoner in my old flat. I was socially isolated and became depressed. I could not see how I would be able to afford the costs of moving and this was also weighing heavy on my mind. Without the grant I don't think I could have done it, so thank you. ”

“ This grant was a huge bonus at a time when I really needed it, I was having lots of issues with my state pension and housing benefit and trying to work out why I was being charged too much for rent and did not have enough money to feed and look after myself. The money was very helpful while I worked with services to sort this situation out. ”

Care services with a difference

Our person-centred residential and day care services support the physical and mental wellbeing of each individual, while also providing important social support and companionship. During 2023-2024, we supported 500 older people through these services.

Your generosity helped us to create a home-from-home environment where older individuals can enjoy their later years, and family members can be confident that their loved ones are receiving the best care possible.



“ Everyone is friendly and I much appreciate all the care and thoughtfulness of all who obviously enjoy looking after us. ”

“ We could not do what we do without the skills, experience, professionalism, kindness and talents of our team members and volunteers. ”

Mark Wilson, Chief Operating Officer



Our staff are at the heart of our care services and our Long Service Awards are just one small way that we acknowledge the commitment of our colleagues who give so much of themselves to the charity. This year, Sue Phillips, a Health Care Assistant at Davenham Care Home, was presented with her 25 Year Long Service Award and many others were celebrated for lengths of service between five and 25 years.



Financial summary

This year has been one of transformation as we continue to enhance our care services and grow our grants programme, whilst navigating the challenges within the sector. We recorded a net negative movement in funds of £168,000, inclusive of one-off gains, and our endowment fund continues to provide stability during this time of change. There have been changes to our property portfolio; we surrendered the lease for our central London offices and our head office is now The Bradbury Centre in Woking. We made the difficult decisions to close our care home in Bournemouth and to put our care home in Oxfordshire up for sale, both of which occurred after this reporting period. In both cases our priority is to ensure smooth transitions for the residents, families and staff. Looking ahead, we are excited about our plans to continue providing the best care and support we can for older people.

Donations, legacies, and the value of pro bono services received totalled £752,000 in the year. Our Winter Warmth Appeal raised £18,000 and, along with other donations we distributed grants worth £58,000 to help older people stay warm and safe during the coldest months. Overall, the total value of the grants we distributed increased from £259,000 to £361,000. The generosity of all our supporters is very much appreciated.



Thank you

We are deeply thankful to the generous individuals and organisations whose support has helped transform the lives of older people. Your contributions are essential to sustaining our grants programme and enhancing the care services we provide. Simply put, none of our work would be possible without you. Together, we are making a real difference to the lives of those who need it most.



Vision:

We aspire to a society where all older people have the opportunity to live fulfilled lives



Mission:


We will do this by delivering services personalised to individual needs and integrated with communities



Values:

We will always promote wellbeing, strive for excellence, treat people with respect, keep everyone safe



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