

Petitioner Letter of 10 May 2012

## **Response to Dedicated Minister for Older People.**

Grandparents Apart UK have just received the results of a survey conducted by Katrina Reid, Development Office, About Families, Centre for Research on Families and Relationship, University of Edinburgh about the service we provide to people that have contacted our helpline or joined our group. The results show we have provided essential support and guidance to help grandparents and in 11 years of having a helpline and dealing with older people makes us frontline specialists.

Our helpline receives many calls from grandparents, many of them older people and it can be very hard to finish a call because the older person will not let you go. They are often very lonely and cling on to any contact they can. This has been going on for so long it clearly shows that not enough is being done by this government to alleviate this loneliness and isolation that is making our older peoples life a misery.

Case history.

Mary:

Mary is a 77 year old who lived in a tidy well kept pensioner's bungalow in Irvine Scotland. It was a terraced row set way back against a high hedge, almost stuck in the far corner and out of the way. Nobody but other pensioners passed by and the loneliness was literally killing her. The only person Mary saw throughout the week was the lady who brought her groceries. Her daughter lives 100 miles away and her son try to visit as much as he can but has his own family commitments.

Only her doctor regularly attended to Mary for her arthritis, kidney problems and other ailments and she was often taken into hospital for a few days at a time to clear up infections.

Mary moved into a sheltered home with a communal room for mixing with other residents where she still had her independence. After an initial settling in period Mary says she now loves it. Having company and getting out to the nearby shops, she is now more out than in when weather permits and her doctors visits has been reduced. No one size fits all and more individual care, physical and emotional must be made available to suit the varied needs of our elderly people.

Think of the savings in cost to the NHS alone with doctors or nurses and even ambulances coming and going a lot of the time to attend older people who could possibly be healthier if they were happier. Integration and inclusion can make an enormous psychological difference.

(evidence gathered from a survey by Professor Peter Smith and Linda Drew from Goldsmith College Oxford claims that 82% of real and psychosomatic illnesses can be caused by loneliness alone) so why do we still have older people living in isolated situations?

Age Scotland does not agree that a Dedicated Minister or even a Commissioner for older people will help our elderly. Their sister charities in Wales lobbied hard for such a Minister and Northern Ireland also support it. Perhaps too much attention is put on grand plans and not enough on actually addressing the real problem which is Loneliness!!!

A commissioner i.e. for children is unapproachable by ordinary folk so a Dedicated Minister would serve older people's interest better.

Commissioner campaign  
John Lynch

Commissioner for Older People

The purpose of this email is to remind the Scottish Government that Older People in Scotland also need a stronger voice than at present.

Alex Neil MSP: "The hallmark of a civilised nation is the way in which it treats its older citizens. Scotland's older people have made, and continue to make, an invaluable contribution to our society. They deserve to be treated with dignity and respect in their old age.

Alex Neil's Bill highlighted a few key functions of the Commissioner:

- to promote awareness and understanding of the rights and interests of older people;
- to review current policy, law and practice relating to the rights and interests of older people;
- to promote best practice by those who provide services to older people;
- to promote the use of the skills and experience of older people; and
- to promote, commission, undertake and publish research on matters relating to the rights and interests of older people.

Additionally the Commissioner will have the power to carry out investigations into how service providers have regard to the rights, interests and views of older people in their dealings with them.

Alex Neil seemed to have spent a lot of time and effort into drafting his Bill - it was very well laid out - don't let that effort be wasted!

Why we need a commissioner for older people

The Guardian -

I am proposing an amendment to the health and social care bill this week in the House of Lords calling for the appointment of a commissioner for older people. I am increasingly convinced we need a commissioner as story after story recounts failure to Commons health committee's social care report fails to make its case.

The Guardian - Feb 13, 2012

The latest report from the House of Commons health select committee has argued for greater integration of NHS and social care, and particularly for a single commissioner for older people's health, care and housing services.

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