

ageing matters *in Ireland*

Our special delivery card

Age Action members hand over the petition against Budget cuts Pages 4-5




A day just for grandparents Pages 6-7

We meet Daniel O'Donnell - plus a reader competition Pages 12-13



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 Pictured at the handing over of the Age Action pre-Budget petition postcards at Leinster House last month were (from left) Annie Crean, Ellen Reddin, Eileen Adams and Phyllis Talbot. See report: page 4. Photo: Marc O'Sullivan.

Too old to be equal?

This is the title of two reports by the Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly, on the Department of Health's illegal refusal to pay the Mobility Allowance to people over age 66 contrary to the Equal Status Act 2000.

The Mobility Allowance is a monthly payment, currently worth €208.50, made by the HSE to people with a severe disability "who are unable to walk and who would benefit from occasional trips away from home". The Department has known about its illegal actions since 2008, and in 2011 it even agreed to comply with the Ombudsman's recommendation to abolish the upper age limit. Yet recently (October 2012) the Department has rejected a further recommendation from the Ombudsman because it "would create liabilities the State could not afford". (For further details see *Too old to be Equal – A Follow up*: the correspondence reads like a script of the TV programme *Yes Minister* but it's not funny.)

The Department of Health simultaneously rejected a recommendation from the Ombudsman to withdraw a restrictive definition of disability to exclude people with psychological or intellectual disabilities contrary to the Act.

The Ombudsman states: "There can be no justification for allowing this disregard for the law to continue. We are a society ruled by law." This must be particularly true of a Government department with special responsibility for protecting many vulnerable people, who are most at risk in a period of increasing austerity. Ireland's equality legislation and infrastructure was once the envy of Europe, but these cases suggest that our advances might be systemically dismantled.

We are well aware that we are living in a period of austerity, but I doubt there is much public support for cutting services to people who can't walk or are intellectually or psychologically disabled. Surely the cost of supporting such groups cannot be the tipping point of our economic survival.

These cases are particularly relevant to those of us campaigning for more effective policies and services for our ageing population, while we await the Government's National Positive Ageing Strategy, being prepared by the Department of Health. It is critically important that this strategy includes legislation setting out the rights of older people within a framework of equality and justice for everyone with special protection for the most vulnerable groups of all ages.

In 2011, 20 people received prison sentences for civil debt including the heinous crime of not paying the TV licence. Yet public servants can flout the law with impunity. What kind of sanction could encourage greater compliance to the rule of law; say 1,000 hours of community service? — **Robin Webster**



■ Alice Kelly and Alice Nolan, Arklow Active Retirement, who attended the elder abuse workshop in the town on October 31.

Raising awareness of elder abuse

Elder Abuse occurs much more often than we would like to imagine and affects thousands of older people each year.

Continuing our work to raise awareness of elder abuse, Age Action recently partnered with Co Wicklow’s Older Persons’ Network to organise two elder abuse awareness workshops.

Funded by the Equality Authority, the aim of the workshops was to increase knowledge about elder abuse and build links locally to help prevent abuse from happening. As one attendee said: “It is important to keep it in the public domain – make people and potential victims aware of what is acceptable and what is not.”

There was a large turnout

at both workshops with nearly 100 people attending in total. Sarah Mahon, one of four HSE Dedicated Officers for the Protection of Older People, made a presentation on the HSE social work-led service. She spoke about how each local health office has a case worker who takes referrals of elder abuse and supports those who have experienced abuse.

Feedback from the workshops was very positive. Attendees felt that we all can do more to spread the word that elder abuse is unacceptable. Following recent child abuse scandals and the knowledge that many knew and did nothing, they commented on the need to bring elder abuse out into the open and let those who are experiencing abuse know they are not alone and help is available.

Across the two workshops a large number of suggestions were made on how to prevent abuse. These included legal and care planning, support for family carers and the development of robust standards and regulation for paid home care. All suggestions will feed into a report on the workshops being compiled by Age Action.

We stress that if you are concerned about elder abuse and would like to talk to a case worker about your situation or would like to talk to them on behalf of someone you know, please contact the HSE in confidence on 1850 24 1850.

For further information on other support services, contact Age Action’s information telephone line, 01 4756989 Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

— Emer Begley



■ Handing over of the pre-Budget petition to the Government were (from left): Age Action Glor group members Phyllis Talbot, Ellen Reddin, Mary Beagan (Age Action Monaghan shop manager), the Minister for Older People Kathleen Lynch, Age Action chief executive Robin Webster, Age Action senior information officer Gerry Scully, and Glor group members Eileen Adams and Annie Crean. Photo: Marc O'Sullivan

Sending our message on cuts

Older people and their families across Ireland have sent a loud and clear message to Government ahead of the Budget, with thousands signing Age Action's petition post-card campaign calling for the protection of key supports for older people.

"The response has been phenomenal," Age Action spokesman Eamon Timmins said, "from people queuing at signing days on the streets of Dublin, Galway and Cork, to huge demand for cards from our shop in Monaghan, or the

flood of telephone requests for cards from groups around the country."

A group of Age Action members delivered thousands of cards to the Minister for Older People, Kathleen Lynch, at Leinster House on November 20. "We are urging the Government and those tasked with making difficult Budget decisions to read the comments on cards carefully," Age Action chief executive Robin Webster said. "Many people desperately need supports such as home helps, the Household Benefits Package, the fuel allowance, their Medical Card, the State Pension and the free travel scheme to remain living independently at home, with a little dignity."

Among those who signed the cards were people who were vulnerable due to poor health, isolation or low income. Signers also included active older people who are carers, volunteers and community activists. "By continuing to support older people, communities can reap the benefit of this army of volunteers and helpers," Mr Webster added.

Key messages from the petition campaign were also conveyed to the IMF when an Age Action delegation met with their resident representative, Peter Bueur, on November 13. Age Action highlighted the extent to which cuts were hitting the most vulnerable of older people the hardest.

"We pointed to the fact

Huge response to campaign in Cork

There has been an excellent response to the pre-Budget campaign from the people of Cork. Twenty-eight community groups in Cork City and County took batches of petition cards and these have been delivered to head office. There was also an excellent response from the public when we set up a stall outside the GPO on Oliver Plunkett St on October 26. At times there were queues of willing signatories looking for space at the desk to sign.

A big thank you is in order for the volunteers from the Care & Repair and Getting Started programmes in Cork who helped out on the day. Derry McCarthy, Bernie McEvoy, Brian Conlon, Mags Lordan, Clodagh O’Driscoll and Breda Heffernan braved the cold to ensure that the people of Cork had their chance to contribute to the campaign. Eamon Timmins, Julie

Oates and John O’Mahony from Age Action also attended. Over 2,000 signed petitions were collected in Cork.

Cork members of Age Action have also contributed greatly to the pre-Budget campaign. Following our members meeting in June and through subsequent consultation, a shortlist of the issues that affect older people most was agreed on. John O’Mahony, Age Action South Regional Manager, wrote to all Cork based TDs, Cork city councillors and Cork county councillors outlining these issues and requesting that they be addressed in the forthcoming Budget and in future policy decisions. Every Age Action Member in Cork was sent a template of a similar letter to be forwarded to Minister Kathleen Lynch and to their local elected representatives.

that all older people had their fuel supports cut once last year following the reduction in the free gas and electricity units under the Household Benefits Package, but the poorest of older people were cut twice, with the payment period for the means-tested fuel allowance reduced by six weeks,” Mr Timmins said.

Age Action also highlighted the hardship being caused by the HSE’s decision to reduce the number of home help hours provided to older people this year by 900,000 hours (see page 16).

Mr Webster said it was essential that everyone who is concerned at the impact these cuts are having on older people should contact their local TD to express that concern before Budget day.



■ Age Action’s Jade O’Connell, Gerry Scully and Mick Donohue getting signatures for the campaign outside Dublin’s GPO.



■ Susan O’Shea and Carmel Downes in the Age Action group that participated in the anti-austerity march in Dublin.

A grand day for grandparents

On September 28 the students at Scoil Mobhí, Glasnevin, Dublin, invited a special group of older people to the school to mark Grandparents Day.

The fun, song and stories that followed highlighted the great importance of the strong bond between children and their grandparents. It was a fitting event for Positive Ageing Week and all the more apt given that 2012 is the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity Between the Generations.

Two students give their account of the day.



■ Dáithí Ó Cualáin with his Daideo Mike Dennehy during the very successful intergenerational day run at Scoil Mobhí primary school in Glasnevin, Dublin.

We sang and danced for our guests

Grandparents Day was held in the Na Fianna hall on Mobhí Road, Glasnevin, Dublin 9 on September 28.

On that day we were paired up with children from Junior Infants, buddies as we call them. When we went into the hall with our buddies we walked around looking for our grandparents. We got

the chance to chat to our own grandparents as well as other grandparents.

After that, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th classes went up on the stage in the hall and we sang for all the grandparents. The four classes sang, and the Irish dancers went up and did some Irish dancing for the guests. They really loved it.

When the dancers were finished, our class went up

on stage with our buddies and sang 'Laethanta na Seachtaine' with them then we went back over to the school and the grandparents left a bit later after they had their tea and sandwiches and cakes.

We gave them Ireland's Own magazines to take home too.

Everyone had a great day.

— Orla Gray, Rang 6
Scoil Mobhí

At Scoil Mobhí we call it Lá na Seanóirí

On Grandparents day we all got paired up with some buddies from Junior Infants so we could bring them over to the hall in Na Fianna.

We were the first classes to go over. We went up on stage and sang a song with our buddies.

After that we got to spend some time with our grandparents. We chatted with them about school when they were at school. We also launched a book about Saint Mobhí, our patron saint about whom a great grandparent from the school had written.

After half an hour, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class went back over to the hall to have a lit-

tle sing-song with the grandparents. After the sing-song the grandparents stayed another while and then they started to leave.

I think the grandparents had a great time at Grandparents day this year, we call it Lá na Seanóirí.

— **Tiarnán Mac Cába**
6th Class
Scoil Mobhí



■ Grandparents enjoying the hospitality and the sing-song at Scoil Mobhí





■ Some of the cyclists preparing to saddle up at the start of the trip, and then out in the Phoenix Park enjoying the fresh air and the fantastic autumn colours.



A great autumn day in the Phoenix Park

Last month Age Action saddled up to organise a cycling trip for older men.

On October 18, Age Action organised the bike trip in Phoenix Park and a tour of Farmleigh. The event was organised in conjunction with the Community Foundation of Ireland as part of the Jumpstart Scheme, which aims to get older men more involved in group and physical activities.

The day was a great success with 12 men joining us on the bike ride from Parkgate Street to Farmleigh. Some of the men hadn't been on a bike for 40 years, and while some of us got off to a shaky start, we were flying along in no time!

The trip inspired stories among the group about cycling in Dublin years ago. One man told us of his parents who used to cycle everywhere — in fact he was wearing his father's bicycle

clips, which were 60 years old!

Farmleigh also brought back memories and lots of questions for those who hadn't been there before. It was a fascinating tour.

The feedback has been great with some of the older men saying that they were delighted to get out and try something new and make new friends in the process! Watch this space for more events and activities coming up!

— Keelin McCarthy



■ Deputy David Stanton speaking at the launch of Midleton Care and Repair, which is provided by our new community partners South East Cork Area Development.

Care & Repair continues to spread

Two more Care and Repair community partners have signed up with Age Action to extend the service to parts of Dublin and Cork.

Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore last month launched the Care and Repair programme which is now being provided by the Southside Partnership. The group will provide Care and Repair to older people in the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown area. To make an appointment or get further details of the service phone (01) 445-5450 or email careandrepair@sspship.ie Meanwhile, Care and Repair is now also being

provided in Midleton, Co. Cork, by our community partners South East Cork Area Development. Local TD David Stanton launched the service last month. The service can be contacted by phoning (021) 461-3432.

“Care and Repair helps some of the most vulnerable older people in our community to get by on a day-to-day basis,” he said. “It’s great to see the programme launched in Midleton, and I’m sure older people here will benefit from the programme for many years to come.”

The launch of the Midleton service means that Care and Repair is now available across large tracts of east Cork. It is also being provided by groups in Cobh and Youghal.

Care and Repair continues to be one of Age Action’s great success stories. It was established to carry out minor repairs for older and vulnerable people free of charge, to give them access to reliable tradesmen for larger jobs, and to provide a befriending service. The vision of the programme is to enable older and vulnerable people to remain in their own homes, in their own communities, living as independently as possible, through the improvement of their housing conditions and their level of comfort, security and well-being.

We are continuing to seek new community partners to enable us to eventually provide a nationwide programme.

Christmas lunch with all the trimmings

Are you looking for the right venue to catch up with some pals and have a great lunch, while supporting a wonderful cause?

On December 13, Age Action will host a Christmas lunch at the Burlington Hotel, Dublin. There will be carol singers, a mulled wine

reception, a traditional Christmas lunch with all the trimmings, entertainment afterwards by David O'Connor, and for all the good boys and girls, maybe even a surprise guest!

Contact the fundraising team for further details. Tickets are going fast so book yours now!

■ **The Bugle Babes, who entertained guests at last year's Christmas lunch.**



Christmas Raffle

Age Action has launched its annual Christmas raffle, with all this year's proceeds going towards our much needed Care and Repair programme. Today more than ever before Irish people are suffering from isolation and turn to Age Action looking for support. In 2011 we helped 31,732 people. We can help them. Our services are free, but we need money to keep providing them.

If you would like to help us, please contact the Fundraising team at 475-6989 to arrange for some raffle books to be sent to you. Tickets are €5 each or a book of five for €20.

Walk the Camino Way

In May 2013, Age Action is organising to bring a group of 20 people to experience the Camino Way for themselves on a sponsored walk.

We will depart Dublin Airport on a direct Aer Lingus flight to Santiago, where we will be met by our experienced tour guide for transfer to our hotel, just over 100km away. We will start our walk on Sunday and will

arrive back in Santiago on Friday. Along the route we will stay in carefully selected hotels on a half board basis.

The cost of this seven-night trip is €1,800, which includes flights, accommodation on a half-board basis, the use of a tour guide along the route, and hotel transfers. Over half of the money collected will go directly to helping fund our programmes.

Contact the fundraising team at (01) 475-6989 for further details.



Design a Christmas card

Age Action is offering you the opportunity to design your own Christmas card. What better way to send your Christmas

greetings to your family and loved ones than in a specially designed card. A pack of 12 cards and 12 gift tags costs €12.

Please give Rhona or Shelia a call at (01) 475-6989 or email christmascards@ageaction.ie

In a new feature, Independent financial adviser **Ian Feighery** answers some of your financial questions

Is my life policy good value?

John asks: *I have a whole of life reviewable policy which provides me with a life cover benefit on death. I recently got a letter from the life company stating that the premium on this policy will remain the same until the next policy review date. My question is, are these types of policies good value and worth keeping in place or would I be better off taking what monetary value is available and set something else up?*

Answer: These types of life policies have been in the media recently because there have been a number of unhappy policy holders whose premiums have increased substantially after recent premium policy reviews.

Whole of life policies generally work as follows.

When the policy is taken out, a certain portion of the premium goes towards paying for the cost of the “actual” life cover benefit, and the remainder of the premium is invested in a savings part.

The savings part is invested in a fund which the life company hopes will grow over time and help pay towards the cost of the life



■ **Ian Feighery is a financial adviser at independent financial advisers BCK Wealth Management Ltd**

benefit as the policy holder gets older.

When people are younger, a larger portion of the premium will go towards savings as the cost of the life cover is cheaper, but it gets a lot more expensive as we get older.

These policies have premium review dates built into the contract which generally happen every five years of the policy up to age 70 and annually thereafter. The cost of life cover increases as we get older. If the savings part has not performed as hoped, the life company will have no choice but to increase the premium to maintain the life benefit.

It is extremely difficult to answer your question definitively, as no one policy is the same as the next. In my

experience of these policies, the premiums seem to remain level until individuals go over the age of 60-65. I would suggest that you speak to an adviser who could do a full review of your policy and give you an opinion based on your individual policy.

Ian Feighery is a financial adviser at independent financial advisers BCK Wealth Management Ltd (www.bck.ie) and can be contacted by email at ian@bck.ie

If you have a question for Ian, email it to eamon.timmins@ageaction.ie or post it to Eamon Timmins, Age Action, 30/31 Lower Camden Street, Dublin 2, with “financial column query” marked on the envelope or in the email subject box.



■ Daniel O'Donnell on his music: There are so many great songs I have recorded – they are not great because I recorded them – they were *great* songs

Daniel's favourites feed his fame

If you had one question to ask one of Ireland's most successful singers of all time, what would it be?

That's the problem we were posed when Daniel O'Donnell's public relations consultant contacted *Ageing Matters* to confirm we had an interview with the Donegal star.

Daniel has just written himself into entertainment history books by becoming the first artist to have an album in the UK charts every year for 25 years.

For the record, since 1988 he has had 33 albums and 19 singles in the British charts. By his own account,

he has made more than 36 albums "and counting".

Having consulted fans and carried out an office poll: the question that most people wanted to ask Daniel was, from the hundreds of songs on dozens of albums, which was his favourite?

"When I look back on all the albums, I sound so different – but that was the way I sounded at the time and each of those albums was the best I could do at the time," he reflects. "They are all special and mean something to me.

"There are so many great songs I have recorded – they are not great because I recorded them – they were great songs," he says

modestly. But the song that holds a special place in his heart is "My Donegal Shore".

"It is not just the fact that I am from Donegal that makes it special. It is also the song that first got me recognition in my own right, back in 1983," he said.

Beginning his 29th year as a solo artist in January, Daniel has many great memories to date. Among those was the success he had with the song "I Want to Dance With You". "As a child I grew up watching *Top of the Pops* and that was the song that got me on the show – a show that did not normally showcase my kind of music," he said.

Daniel turns 51 in

Readers' competition

This month readers have the opportunity to win a copy of Daniel O'Donnell's new album *Songs from the Movies and More*, along with an autographed photograph of the star.

To be in with a chance to win answer the following question (which won't be difficult if you have read the interview on this page):

How many consecutive years has Daniel O'Donnell had an album in the UK charts?

Send your answer, along with your name, address and daytime telephone number to: The Editor, Ageing Matters, Age Action, 30/31 Lower Camden Street, Dublin 2. The closing date for entries is December 20.



December and his career has reached a stage where he now has choices. He had a nervous breakdown in 1992 as a result of the huge workload he had taken on. Twenty years later, he is pacing himself: "I took some time out in 2011. Over a period of 18 months, I am taking almost 12 months off up until next August."

Our interview is done over the phone, from his holiday home in Spain. "Majella's (his wife) parents come out here, and we usually spend January and February here, but next year I will take a few more weeks here."

He has a few commitments in the US in October and November, he will perform on a cruise in

the Caribbean up until December 15, and then he is off until next August. When he returns to work, his schedule will be intense. He will tour Ireland in August, the UK in October, he has a five-week stint in Missouri in November, and is then touring Australia and New Zealand in March, 2014.

In part, Daniel modestly puts his chart success down to the fact that he does not write his own material, but records the work of others. "There are so many great songs out there that I have recorded, so I would do a country album, then an Irish album or a gospel album," he said.

His latest collection *Songs*

from the Movies and More – which earned him his special place in UK music history – is such a collection.

"The promoter I work with in America has a home in Vienna and when I heard this I told him how much I loved *The Sound of Music*," Daniel explained. "He said it would be great if I came to Vienna and did a show dedicated to *The Sound of Music* and so the idea for this album was born."

And with albums, come new opportunities. Daniel and his band are planning to perform at a concert with the Mozart Orchestra and the Vienna Boys' Choir in Vienna in May, 2014. It is a concert he is already looking forward to.



■ Age Action's Sarah Nevin and Brenda Quigley recruiting volunteers at the Templebar Volunteer Fair in August.

A place for volunteers & members

Welcome to a new page where membership and volunteering news can be found! We hope to bring you news about the work of our membership and volunteering department.

September and October have been a busy period for us. At our members meeting on September 17 our membership department was delighted with the feedback received from members.

Following this, we have organised a membership focus group meeting for

November 12. We hope to gather more information and feedback about how membership of Age Action can be developed and improved for our members. We will keep you updated on our progress.

Volunteer-wise, the Burlington Tea Party and Sligo Tea Party were a great success! A big thank you to all the volunteers who helped make sure that both events ran smoothly and happily. There was a lot of singing and cheering to be enjoyed. There was also a great turnout at the RDS Over-50s Show. Thank you to all who helped out.

Finally, we attended the DCU volunteer fair in

October. A very rainy day indeed, but we carried on! We spoke to many young adults who were eager to know more about Age Action which was great to see.

Next month, we hope to bring you more news from the membership and volunteering side of things – highlighting the work that we are doing for and with, our valued members and volunteers.

If you or someone you know wishes to join and/or volunteer with Age Action, please call (01) 475-6989 and ask for Sarah Nevin. Alternatively, please email volunteer@ageaction.ie or membership@ageaction.ie

New ways to stay in touch with Age Action

A quiet revolution has been taking place Age Action's communication with the wider world. We use social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to engage with thousands of people every day. Our Twitter account (www.twitter.com/AgeAction) is followed by more than 1,700 people. Our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/AgeActionIreland) is "liked" by over 1,300 people.

We use these platforms to post photos of our activities, ask people for support, engage

in conversations and debates, and keep people informed about our work.

"While we are committed to updating members through *Ageing Matters* each month, we also encourage our members and supporters to use our social media to know what we are doing," Age Action's Head of Advocacy and Communications Eamon Timmins said. "It also gives people a platform to provide feedback and share their experiences with our community of supporters."

U3A MEETINGS



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Meeting Last Tuesday of the month 11am (Jan to April 2013) in Ilac Library Henry Street. Contact John Roche: (01) 201-7490

© Blackrock U3A

Contact Eileen Larkin: (087) 4128607, (01) 455-7653

© Ballyroan U3A

Meet every 2nd Monday at 11am in Ballyroan Library. Contact Al Connor: (01) 490-3212

© Ballymun U3A

Meetings every 2nd Monday, 2pm in Ballymun Library. Contact: Vera Butler (01) 842-2256

© Lucan U3A

Meetings 2nd Monday of the month, Ballyowen Castle. Contact Ann Hargaden (email: annhargaden@eircom.net)

© Blessington U3A

Meetings 3rd Tuesday of each month. Contact Anne Cowie: (045) 865-159

© Sutton/Baldoyle-Dublin

North-East. Meets 10.45-12.45, Baldoyle Library. Second Wednesday every month (excl Jun-Aug). Contact: u3asutbal@gmail.com. Phone: 01-832 3697 Website: u3asuttonbaldoyle-dublin/

© Active Virginians U3A

Meet every week. Contact Ann Brodie at (049) 854-8232

© Maynooth U3A.

Maynooth Library Meet every 2nd Friday 11am. Contact Helena Kirkpatrick: (01) 628-5128

© An Cosan U3A Tallaght.

Meet every 2nd Thursday.

Contact Imelda Hanratty:

(01) 462-8488

© Waterford U3A

Contact Terry (Theresa) Moloney: (051) 876542 or email tmoloney@wit.ie

© Monaghan U3A

Contact Mary Beagan: (047) 75942, (086) 3314439

© Roscara U3A,

Co Roscommon. Contact Helen Waldren: (094) 962-1233

© Tramore U3A

Meetings 1st Thursday each month, 11am, Coastguard Station, Love Lane, Tramore. Contact Mollie Hunt, molliehunt@eircom.net

Email Age Action Education Officer Margaret Fitzpatrick at u3a@ageaction.ie or (01) 475-6989 for information.

Annual membership application

We/I wish to join Age Action Ireland and enclose € membership fee, plus € voluntary donation = € total payable to Age Action Ireland Ltd

- €20 Individual — retired/unwaged
- €40 Individual — employed
- €60 NGO
- €200 Statutory body
- €500 Corporate

Name

Organisation

Address

.

.

Tel

Fax

Email

Contact person

Signature

Date

Please return to:

**Age Action Ireland Ltd,
30/31 Lower Camden Street,
Dublin 2**

Tel: (01) 475-6989

Fax: (01) 475-6011

Email: info@ageaction.ie

Death of Dave Connick



It is with much sadness that we announce the death of our colleague Dave Connick. He died suddenly on November 21. Dave was a valued member of our Care & Repair maintenance team. He took pride in his work and was well liked by our clients. He

always had a smile and put the needs of the older person first. Dave was kind, courteous and went the extra mile to help those who were in most need. We will miss you.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, management, staff and volunteers, we extend our deepest sympathies to Dave's family.

Rest in peace

November is the month when we remember our loved ones who have died. Age Action remembers its 17 members who have died in 2011/2012 and all our members who have died since 1992. May they rest in peace

Alarm over home help cuts

Age Action is seeking an urgent meeting with the HSE to express its alarm at the scale of the cuts in the home help service being made and how these cuts are being administered.

"The loss of 900,000 home help hours this year is colossal, and it is having a huge impact on some of the most vulnerable older people who are struggling to remain at home with dignity," Age Action spokesman Eamon Timmins said.

The older people's charity is also concerned at how the HSE is deciding where the cuts should be made, and how they are communicating their decisions. "We don't believe that informed, individual assessments are being made before home help hours are cut," Mr Timmins said. "We are receiving calls from people who have not received any notification that their home help service was cut or had been ended completely."