

Time



Spring 2021

Together



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Bringing generations together

Welcome



I know some of you have had a dreadful time over the past few months and sincerely hope you're feeling more hopeful now restrictions are lifting, and summer is on the way.

In this issue, our cover star, Chitra, talks openly about her difficult year, and the small acts of kindness that have helped her through.

Chitra also tells us how she can't wait to attend her local Re-engage tea party again and I'm sure many of you in our tea party groups feel the same. We're keen for you to be able to meet again too, once the government where you live says it's safe and your volunteers are ready. I'm sure your wonderful reunions will be worth the wait.

In the meantime, we're celebrating a whole year of call companions and I'm thrilled that almost 2,000 of you are now enjoying a new, supportive friendship as a result. We ask one of our very first matches, Richard and Beth, about their year of chats on page 8.

We know the lockdown has encouraged more older people to get online and we'd love to know your experience of this so we can tailor our support accordingly. Please do let us know by completing the 'Meryl's Memo' insert and posting it back to us in the envelope provided.

And if you're in need of inspiration to get online, you must read our interview with the resourceful Joy on page 5 who, at 90, routinely uses email, text and plays online Scrabble.

I hope you enjoy the read.

Meryl Davies
chief executive, Re-engage

“It’s been tough, but things are getting better”

Our cover star, Chitra, 79, reflects on a year of lockdown.



Chitra with Miran, centre, enjoying a tea party two years ago.

“ I came to England from Trinidad in the ‘60s as an independent young woman. I never thought I would get married, but in the end I did. At first, I kept my own surname but then got fed up with it and thought, ‘I’ve married the man, I might as well take his name!’

My husband was a lovely, lovely man. We were married for just 15 years and I’ve been a widow for 35.

I’m in sheltered accommodation now, totally independent, but there’s a manager to call on if I ever need help. Every morning she phones to ask me how I am, which is just lovely.

Sometimes hers is the only voice I hear all day. There are other residents around but the lockdown has kept us apart.

When we went into lockdown last year, I lost myself for a while. I’ve been in and out of hospital with heart problems, so it’s been hard. But as my darling ma used to say, ‘Old age, no complaints!’

And things are getting better. I’ve had my Covid jabs and my nephew and niece visit me now. I should be able to have lunch in my niece’s garden soon, and watch the foxes and squirrels.

I’m also looking forward to the tea parties starting again. I really miss them. I’m lucky because my Re-engage volunteer, Miran, always keeps in touch with me. It’s a joy to chat to her. It’s been a tough year, but I really am very well looked after.

Re-engage volunteer Miran says, “Keeping in touch has helped us all through the past year. In our group, we’ve been chatting over the phone and sending cards. Anything to stay ‘close’ and show everyone they haven’t been forgotten.”



Fighting fit like a Dragon

We're running new exercise groups for older people in Wales in partnership with professional rugby team, Dragons. Fitness coach, Gareth Sullivan, shares more.

What are the groups like and what's your role?

I'm a professional coach for Welsh rugby team, Dragons, and run the general fitness group for Re-engage in Wales.

For now, all our classes are online because of government restrictions, but we're hoping to move to face-to-face classes as soon as it's safe to do so. We'll continue running online classes too.

What are the benefits?

People come to make friends and share common interests.

And then of course there are the physical benefits. Our classes focus on the muscles we use every day so that day-to-day activities such as walking up and down stairs or pouring the kettle become easier.

What are your top tips for keeping fit in older age?

My first tip would be that you should try to remain mobile. If you can, try to make sure that you are active between five to six times a day, for at least five minutes.

This could include simple arm strengthening exercises. Start by holding a can of beans in one hand

and gently lift it to your shoulder, bending your elbow, before slowly lowering your arm again.

Carefully walking up and down the stairs a couple of times can be a great form of exercise. Gently stretching your limbs is equally important.

My second tip would be to drink plenty of water throughout the day and finally, to try to get some fresh air every day. The mind and the body work in sync and just taking in fresh air will make you feel better overall.

If you live in Wales and would like to join our exercise groups, call us on 02922 801 802 or 02922 790 147.



Joy, right, at a tea party before the lockdown.

“Emails are my lifeline”

Despite turning 91 soon, Joy, from London, uses the internet to stay connected.

“ I was evacuated during the war and sent to Wales to live on a farm. Even though I was only nine, I enjoyed it. The weekly highlight was queuing up with the locals to buy chips!

Maybe the experience of being away made me more brave. After the war, as a teenager I travelled with a friend to the first ever Edinburgh festival. I met my future husband there.

I've been on my own now for 11 years. Life can be lonely at times, especially in lockdown. My daughter lives out of town, though she's in contact, as are my two lovely grandsons.

Going to my first tea party was the best thing I ever did. The volunteers are so lovely. They keep in touch, and I chat to some of the other guests too.

Apart from that, I've got my iPad and my mobile phone. I play scrabble on my iPad. My eyesight is failing, so I can't read anymore. Instead, I send

loads of emails. That's my lifeline – emails and the phone. And I watch Sunday Mass online.

I learnt how to use the computer after my husband died. I thought, 'This is a lonely life. I can't sit here and expect people to come and see me. I have to do something.' I joined a centre where they taught me computer skills. I know the basics now and even made an online Christmas card last year.

I've really missed being able to go to the hairdressers in the lockdown. I'd normally have a whole day there because the girls are good company.

A while ago, I told them I wouldn't be able to come anymore as I needed transport. They said, 'We'll come and pick you up.' So that was that.

People like my Re-engage volunteers and those girls, they really are the best.



The power of a good chat

Lisa Belletty, from our valued partner, People's Postcode Lottery, says our work has never been more needed.



“ A few years ago, I was lucky enough to get chatting to a vivacious lady in her 70s over a slice of cake.

Players of People's Postcode Lottery have supported Re-engage since 2017 and we'd taken the opportunity to celebrate our partnership by hosting a tea party at our office in Edinburgh.

As we chatted, I discovered just how much we had in common. We were from the same area of London and we had both moved to another city. We both missed our families.

That was three years ago, and I still remember the sense of connection as if it were yesterday.

Since 2017, £1.4 million in funding from players of People's Postcode Lottery has made it possible for Re-engage to help more and more older people stay connected.

We feel proud that this support has meant so many of you have been able to enjoy regular phone calls from Re-engage volunteers throughout the lockdown. Human connections have never meant more.

My tea party experience showed me just how powerful a good chat can be. I really hope your phone calls are giving you a boost. If I've learnt anything from the current crisis, it's how precious these moments of connection really are.

”

We asked those of you with a call companion about your experience:

94%

of you said the calls give you something to look forward to.

88%

said the calls make you feel happier.

92%

said being part of Re-engage has a positive impact on your life.

Would you like a call companion? Phone us on 0800 716 543 to sign up.



Helping you live safely and independently

Are you concerned about living on your own? Many older people find it a worry and like to know that help is there, should anything happen.

For over 30 years, our new partner Doro Care has been helping tens of thousands of people across the UK live at home independently thanks to its personal alarm service. Eldercare (a Doro Company) is one of the country's leading and longest-established personal alarm service providers.

Doro's service also comes with free expert care advice to give added reassurance to you and your family.

One of their customers, Bill, who's 79 and lives alone, approached Doro after he fell while he was gardening. He was unable to get back up and lay in the garden for over three hours until his neighbour heard his cries for help.

Following a short hospital stay, Bill returned home but was very reluctant

to go into the garden in case he fell again. His family were concerned that he was losing his confidence and independence.

Doro provided Bill with a personal alarm so that if he falls or needs help, he simply presses the button and they will make sure someone is soon with him.

This has made Bill feel much safer and more confident and he hopes to continue gardening for many years to come.

Doro is offering an exclusive discount for their personal alarm service to Time Together readers. To receive your first four weeks monitoring for free, quote the discount code RE4 when you order over the phone or online.

Doro's personal alarm service starts from less than £2.30 per week and includes access to free expert care advice. Find out more at 0345 603 4576 or visit www.eldercare.co.uk/shop.

“It’s nice to know the call is coming”

Year-long call companions, Richard and Beth, talk about their chats

Richard says:

I’ve been on my own since my wife died 21 years ago. Even so, the lockdown has really been something else.

Over the year, I’ve got to know my call companion Beth quite well. We chat every fortnight about whatever’s going on – the pandemic, my retirement, how we’re spending our days.

It’s nice to know the call is coming. I can feel a bit lost when I’m stuck in the house with no one to talk to. I’m not up with all that Zoom technology. I’ve spent my time doing jigsaw puzzles and working on my tapestry.

Once it’s safe, I’m looking forward to seeing family and going on a trip with a friend. I’ll continue chatting to Beth too, if she wants to keep calling. It’s nice to hear about someone else’s life in another part of the country. It broadens my horizons.

Beth says:

I’ve been a tea party host for a few years. When the tea parties were paused, I was keen to make myself useful and volunteered as a call companion.

I suspect Richard and I were matched because of our shared love of puzzles. Between us, we’ve got through a decent number of jigsaws over the year!

In our calls, we talk about what we’ve been up to and discuss the major news stories. Richard updates me on the cricket and his walks; I fill him in on my outdoor swimming exploits.

It’s been a pleasure to get to know Richard through this experience. It’s lovely to chat and, in a time of so much change, it’s also been great to have a fixed appointment in my diary!

**Would you like a call companion?
Phone us on 0800 716 543 to
sign up.**



Re-engage

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Registered charity in England and Wales
(1146149) and in Scotland (SC039377)

