

Make it matter



Bringing joy into later life • Tackling loneliness • Running to make it matter

Supporting people living with dementia • Staying active, connected and well

Together, we make it matter.

I am delighted to share the latest edition of our supporter magazine with you, and to introduce its new name, *Make it Matter*.

Whilst the Heart & Soul of MHA will never change, it'll no longer be the title of this publication. Instead, your refreshed supporter magazine will be designed around real-world impact. Whether it's big or small, local or national. Because it can all be life-changing, and our world needs more of it.

Make it Matter is closely aligned with our refreshed Charitable Giving and Impact strategy. This strategy is focused on demonstrating the difference MHA makes across our care homes, retirement living schemes, community groups and befriending services, supporting older people to live later life well.

Behind every service are people and moments that matter immeasurably. A resident finding friendship after feeling isolated. A volunteer offering companionship and comfort. An activity that brings joy, confidence and connection. These are not abstract ambitions. They are real outcomes, made possible by people like you.

The stories in this magazine show how your generosity helps to create communities where older people feel valued, supported and able to thrive. But they also remind us there's still more to do, particularly for those who are lonely or isolated. Discover how you can help by supporting our Second Cup appeal, page 4.

I hope you know how much we appreciate the support you give to our charity. Your ongoing kindness is the heartbeat of MHA, and ensures the lives of so many older people can be changed for the better.

So thank you. For everything.



Sam Monaghan
Chief Executive, MHA

Tell us what you think and win!

We would love to hear your feedback on the first edition of Make it Matter.

What did you enjoy reading most?

What stories would you like to see more of in future issues?

Is there anything you would like us to cover next time?

Everyone who shares their thoughts will be entered into a prize draw to **win a £25 Amazon voucher.**

Thank you for helping us shape future editions.

Simply scan the QR code to enter



or visit: mha.org.uk/magazine-survey

Open to UK residents aged 18 or over. Entries close at 23:59 on 31 May 2026. One winner will be selected at random.

Terms and conditions apply. mha.org.uk/terms-conditions/promotions

Loneliness.

Let this sink in for a moment...

In the UK, almost a million people aged 65 or over say they often or always feel lonely.



The scale is both hard to grasp and horrible to imagine. And that figure is expected to rise unless action is taken. So that's what we intend to do.

What many people don't appreciate, is that loneliness isn't just an emotion. It has profound effects on our mental and physical wellbeing too, increasing the risk of anxiety, depression, loss of confidence and reduced independence. For some, everyday life feels harder and more isolating, especially after retirement, bereavement, or changes in health or mobility.

The saddest part? The answer to loneliness can be so simple, so human, and so natural. A quick coffee. Fifteen minutes on the phone. A neighbourly natter. Loneliness is not inevitable. But we need people like you to help us prove that.

Here are some of the ways other people are uniting against loneliness.

Local groups and classes can be a gentle way to meet people at your own pace.

Try befriending support – through MHA you can sign up to receive befriending calls, or volunteer yourself.

Small social groups such as a walking group or book club can feel less daunting and quickly build connection.

Short courses and hobby groups offer chances to learn something new and meet likeminded people.

Local lunch club schemes, like those offered by MHA Communities, offer low-cost meals, centred around enjoying company together.

Video calls, online groups or community forums can help people stay in touch, especially if getting out is difficult.



Sometimes it's hard to know how to help, so we've created the MHA Later Life Hub to offer trusted guidance, practical ideas and encouragement for anyone looking to live later life well.

Visit our Later Life Hub: mha.org.uk/hub

or scan the QR code



Are you making one cup or two?



It's such an innocent question. So harmless. So simple. But the answer is so important. Because that second cup means there's someone to chat to. Someone to share with. It means you're not alone.

And that's why our 'second cup' appeal has been created. Because too many people spend too much time on their own. Day after day. Hour after hour. Cup after cup.

Mary Parker was just one of those people. She had to stay so strong through the death of her husband. But she simply wasn't prepared for the loneliness that followed.



These days are different though. Well, Thursdays to be precise. That's the day Mary's MHA befriender visits. It's the day her mood brightens and her smile widens. It's the day her house gets a little spruce and her best clothes get a little outing.

By the time the doorbell goes, the kettle's already on and the second cup is already standing on the sideboard. And those things mean more than many of us could ever imagine.

The kind of befriending visit that Mary looks forward to can reduce loneliness, restore confidence and help older people to feel part of the world again.

Just 30 minutes a week can make a real difference to someone like Mary.

You could make such a difference, by helping more people to experience that second cup feeling.

And because much of our befriending happens over the phone, we can offer that same friendship and connection to older people right across the UK, wherever they live.

Your support alone will make a difference



You can support our **Second Cup campaign** by making a donation, applying to become a volunteer befriender, or watching Mary's story in our campaign video at mha.org.uk/second-cup

or scan the QR code



A donation of
£25

could fund two face-to-face befriending visits, bringing companionship and a friendly face to a lonely older person.



Every mile matters.



“When people understand where their donation is going, and the impact that it will have on the wellbeing of so many older people, it really resonates.”



On the 26th of April 2026, Abigail Beresford will run 26.2 miles to raise funds for MHA in the London Marathon. Every single step will be fuelled by Abigail's passion for helping older people to live later life well, as her connection to MHA continues to grow more personal and purposeful.

Here, Abigail shares her supporter story since first meeting MHA through her role as marketing manager at Miller Knight; one of our valued contractor partners.

“When I got my first job after university, MHA was the first organisation I was partnered with”, Abigail says. “Very early on, we visited MHA Laurel Court care home during the Jubilee celebrations and saw music therapy in action. There was a couple living with dementia in the home and watching the impact the music had on them both was incredibly moving. It's a moment that has stayed with me ever since.”

Over the years, Abigail has visited several MHA care homes and seen firsthand how services like befriending can transform the quality of life for older people, particularly those whose relatives do not live nearby. That impact resonates strongly with her own family experiences. “My grandparents live quite isolated lives in the Welsh countryside, but staying active and connected has allowed them to remain independent. That sense of connection really matters.”

Fundraising for the marathon has become a powerful motivator throughout her training.

“On tough days, I remind myself that this is a short-term challenge for me, compared to what people living with dementia or facing loneliness experience every day. Knowing the money raised will fund services that support people who feel alone keeps me going.”

Alongside her intensive training, Abigail has also been busy planning fundraising events to help her hit her £2,500 target. “You don't necessarily have to look for big fundraising ideas, sometimes they come from doing something you simply enjoy doing! I've held a few bake sales, a pre-loved clothes market, and I'm currently planning a padel tournament to get more people involved.

“The most successful activity I've done so far was hosting a local pub quiz, which raised an amazing £1,000. I was only expecting friends and family to come, but there were members of the public as well, so it was great to get them involved and teach more people about MHA's work.

“When people understand where their donation is going, and the impact that it will have on the wellbeing of so many older people, it really resonates. I hope following my marathon journey helps more people discover MHA's work and inspires them to support it long after race day.”

To find out more about fundraising visit

[mha.org.uk/
fundraise](https://mha.org.uk/fundraise)

or
scan the
QR code



Wild about wellbeing

Although this article was written on a rainy winter's day, we can't help but smile as we imagine you reading it on a bright spring morning.

Daffodils dancing. Tulips ready to take centre stage. As the birds find their voices in the budding trees.



Hopefully you'll agree that a garden offers so much more than a pleasant view. For many older people, time outdoors brings calm, connection and a renewed sense of purpose.

That's why **MHA's Gardening Week (27 April to 3 May)** is focused on encouraging wildlife and nurturing nature in our green spaces. From care homes to community groups, our nature-based activities are helping older people to engage with the outdoors in ways that support wellbeing and make everyday life richer.



"I never thought I would have the opportunity to go into a woodland area again. We really are so very lucky."

Mo, aged 101.

In Cornwall, our MHA Communities scheme runs the Oak Folk Gardening Social. The group meets twice a month and offers older people the chance to garden together, build friendships and improve both physical and mental wellbeing. It is a simple idea, but one that creates real connection.

At Willersley House care home in Hull, residents have helped shape a much-anticipated new sunken garden and woodland walk. From choosing design details to deciding who should cut the ribbon, residents have been involved from the start. The garden will continue to evolve through the residents' gardening club, with seasonal planting chosen by those who live there.



Families have shared how much these spaces mean, and recent feedback reflects that.

In our annual resident survey, satisfaction with garden areas more than doubled, with 100% of families satisfied with their loved one's engagement with MHA's nature-based activities.



The benefits are backed by research too. At The Wilderness – a unique, reclaimed heritage garden – at our Hall Grange care home in Croydon, residents living with dementia showed a

90% reduction in negative moods after walks outdoors,

alongside a **50% increase in positive moods** and greater confidence over time.

Engaging with nature is just one of the many ways your support allows MHA to help older people live later life well, creating moments of joy, dignity and belonging.



The joyful power of penguins



If we asked you to picture a 'typical' care home, you probably wouldn't imagine two penguins making themselves comfortable as honorary residents.



But then again, MHA has never been a 'typical' charity, so we'll never lose sight of the wonder of laughter and the joy of new experiences in helping people to live later life well. And that's how Pringle and Widget came to waddle their way into the hearts of everyone at The Homestead in Carterton, in celebration of International Penguin Day.

Residents gathered gleefully as the intrepid duo explored the home and soaked up the attention and affection of their human hosts. For some, the visit brought back happy memories of pets or holidays. For others, it was the excitement of experiencing something completely new. But for a short time, everyone felt the joyful power of the penguins. These moments of surprise really do **matter**.

Resident Vera Hibberd, 85, said:

“I was so excited... I got one on my lap and stroked him. They were soft like a baby.”

They create new memories. New stories. New-found connection to the world and each other. And with your continued support, creativity and generosity, we can continue to create new moments of joy, connection and meaning every single day across MHA.

Studies suggest that spending time with animals can boost wellbeing in care homes.

A review supported by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) found that animals can:

- **Help residents reminisce and connect with their past**
- **Create a positive environment, bringing joy and calm**
- **Provide comfort and companionship, helping to reduce loneliness.**



News in brief



35 years of service supporting MHA's mission

Fiona Dennis, MHA's longest serving central support colleague, has marked 35 years with the charity. Since joining in 1991, Fiona has helped ensure payroll and HR systems run smoothly, supporting her colleagues to deliver care and support across MHA services nationwide. Congratulations, Fiona!



Sea dip strengthened activities fund for residents

Nine colleagues from MHA Amatheia care home in Cumbria braved the Irish Sea to raise funds for the home's amenities. The challenge helped boost money used for activities and events that bring residents joy, connection and a sense of occasion. It also showed how colleagues go beyond their day jobs to create memorable moments and enhance wellbeing for the older people they support.



Football trip helped residents relive cherished memories

Three residents at MHA Stones Place enjoyed a matchday trip to Lincoln City's LNER Stadium as part of our Seize the Day initiative, which supports people to revisit meaningful experiences or try something new. For lifelong fans Mavis, Marjorie and Enid, the visit sparked memories, conversation and pride, with family members delighted to see them enjoying live football again after years away.



Community kindness brought festive joy to residents

MHA Warde Aldam in Pontefract took part in the Giving Tree pilot, inviting local people to donate Christmas gifts for residents who may not have family or friends nearby. Tags on the tree shared residents' likes and dislikes using an anonymous ID, helping donors choose something meaningful. Thanks to the generosity of the community, residents had more presents to open on Christmas Day, creating moments of joy and belonging.

Skydiving challenge helped create a garden residents can enjoy

Loren Rosebery, Home Manager at MHA The Herons care home in Nottinghamshire, completed a 14,000ft skydive to raise funds for a garden project for residents. The new space will help residents spend more time outdoors, enjoy gentle activity and share time together in a calming environment. Residents and colleagues celebrated her achievement, showing how local support can turn a bold fundraiser into something that benefits the whole community.



Celebrating the compassion behind MHA's impact

MHA's annual OSCARs awards celebrated colleagues and volunteers who go above and beyond to support residents and members. With over 500 nominations across 13 categories, the ceremony showcased the everyday excellence behind MHA's services. The awards recognised the dedication and professionalism that helps older people feel supported, valued and at home.



A brave challenge to create moments that matter

Colleagues at MHA Pennystone Court faced their fears by snorkelling with sharks at Sea Life Blackpool to raise funds for residents. The money will support a new reminiscence room, with familiar items from earlier decades to encourage connection, storytelling and a sense of wellbeing. Home Manager Lisa Robins praised the team's courage, highlighting the home's commitment to creating experiences that help residents live later life well.



You're invited: Care Home Open Week

This June, join your nearest MHA care home during Care Home Open Week (15-21 June) and see how we help older people in your community live later life well. Each home is planning its own activities and welcomes local visitors. Contact your nearest home directly to find out what's on.





Dementia

life beyond the diagnosis

Many people reading this article will already be familiar with dementia. After all, almost a million people in the UK are living with the condition, meaning millions more loved ones are also affected.

If you're one of those people, we hope you'll find some assurance in this article... and in knowing you are not alone.

Dementia is a term used to describe a group of symptoms that affect memory, thinking, behaviour and everyday life. But it's important to recognise that dementia is not a normal part of ageing, and it does not look the same for everyone.

Some people notice memory problems first, while others experience changes in language, decision-making, mood or motivation. These symptoms happen because cells in the brain become damaged overtime and are less able to communicate with each other. The changes a person experiences depend on which areas of the brain are affected.

There are several different types of dementia:

- **Alzheimer's disease** is the most common.
- **Vascular dementia** is linked to reduced blood flow in the brain, sometimes after a stroke.
- **Lewy body dementia** and **frontotemporal dementia** can affect movement, behaviour or personality.

Understanding these differences can help replace fear with clarity and remind us that dementia is complex.

At MHA, we see every day that the right support can make a real difference. Dementia may change some things, but it does not take away a person's need for connection, purpose and dignity.

Receiving a diagnosis can feel overwhelming, and many people describe it as a time of uncertainty. But with the right support, planning and practical adjustments, it is possible to continue living well.

Many people find that small adjustments, familiar routines, and meaningful activities can help them feel more confident and supported.

We focus on creating environments where people living with dementia can feel safe, valued and at home.

It is also helpful to know that anyone diagnosed with dementia is entitled to a free care and support needs assessment from their local authority.

Financial support may be available too, such as Attendance Allowance or Carer's Allowance.

Above all, dementia care is about wellbeing. Staying active, keeping mentally engaged, and feeling listened to and supported can make a real difference.

At MHA, we support people living with dementia through compassionate care, meaningful activities and trusted relationships.

We also offer guidance and reassurance for families and carers. With the right support, life with dementia can still hold comfort, connection and moments of joy, and no one has to face it alone.



One of the most important early steps is building a support network.

Family, friends, healthcare professionals and local support groups can all help. Sharing the diagnosis may feel difficult, but it often opens the door to practical and emotional support.

Dementia by the numbers

- **Nearly 1 million** people in the UK currently live with dementia, **rising to 1.4 million by 2040**
- **5%** of people over 65 and **20–40%** of those over 85 are affected
- **1 in 2** of us will be affected by dementia in our lifetime, either by developing it or caring for someone who does
- **Dementia is the UK's leading cause of death.**

Brighter thanks to befriending.



Arshdeep Singh

We all have people in our lives who can inspire us to do special things.

For **Arshdeep Singh**, that person is his grandma. And whilst she lives thousands of miles away in India, she's also with Arshdeep every single day, as the inspiration behind their role as a befriender for MHA.

"I really miss my grandma," Arshdeep explains. "She lives in India, and I don't get to spend time with her. It made me realise how important company is, especially for older people."



Arshdeep began volunteering in September 2025, and describes the process as much easier than expected.

"MHA supported me at every step and made me feel comfortable before I started. The guidance and training were clear, and I felt confident and prepared before being matched with an older person."

Since then, Arshdeep has seen the impact of befriending first-hand.

"I've seen a positive change. Over time, the older person I befriend has become more relaxed and open. He looks forward to our visits, enjoys our conversations, and likes playing chess together. Seeing that brings me happiness."



That sense of connection, and the desire to make a difference, led Arshdeep to the role of an MHA Befriender. "What attracted me was the chance to build a real connection with one person," they say. "It's not rushed. It's about being there, listening, talking, and sharing time. That felt very meaningful to me."

Volunteering has brought benefits for Arshdeep too.

"It gives me peace and purpose. Knowing that my time means something to someone else is a really good feeling."

When asked what he enjoys most, it is the simple moments that stand out.

"Talking, laughing, spending time together. Even small things like playing chess can mean a lot."

Arshdeep's message to anyone thinking about volunteering is clear: "Don't hesitate. You don't need to do anything big. Just giving your time and being present can brighten someone's day, and it will stay with you too."



"Just giving your time and being present can brighten someone's day, and it will stay with you too."

Research shows volunteering benefits both volunteers and the people they support.

In MHA's own survey, **96% of Communities volunteers said volunteering improved their mental health**, and **95% felt it increased their confidence and self-esteem**.



Inspired?

Learn more about becoming a volunteer befriender like Arshdeep at:

mha.org.uk/volunteer

or
scan the
QR code





A thought to carry with you

A few weeks ago, I was visiting one of our dementia care homes. I sat in the lounge with Jennifer, our chaplain, when a resident walked over and took her hand.

“This is Evie,” she said. “She loves opera. In fact, she’s a brilliant singer.”

Evie lit up. A spark flickered in her eye, and for a moment she began to remember.

Moments like this sit at the heart of spiritual care. The best support in later life attends to the whole person, not only what is clinically or practically needed, but who someone is at their deepest level.

One of our chaplains describes the work as “holding people’s stories after they forget”. We carry what matters about someone, their name, their passions, their dignity, so that it is not lost, even when memory fades.

MHA Sunday is an invitation to pause, reflect, and respond. Your prayers and generosity support chaplains like Jennifer, and more than a hundred others across MHA, offering presence and comfort every day. They make room for faith and doubt, grief and gratitude, silence and song.



Sam Cowling-Green
Head of Chaplaincy

MHA Sunday

MHA Sunday is a special opportunity for churches and communities to come together in support of older people. The official date is Sunday 14 June, but you can hold your MHA Sunday on any Sunday that works best for you throughout the year.

It can be as simple as a moment of reflection during a service, a collection, or gathering for tea and conversation afterwards. Every action helps raise awareness and support MHA’s work to tackle loneliness and isolation in later life. By taking part, you can help ensure more older people feel connected, valued and able to live later life well.

Find out more and access resources at mha.org.uk/sunday

or scan the QR code



Your legacy.

Every pound can be

priceless

Do you ever wonder how you’ll be remembered? Or what kind of legacy you’d like to leave?

On the one hand it might be a hard thing to think about. But it can also be an incredibly inspiring and rewarding feeling knowing that your kindness and compassion will live on to improve life for others.

Choosing to leave a gift in your will can mean choosing to continue supporting MHA for generations to come. Legacies already play a vital role for our charity, contributing around three-quarters of MHA’s charitable income. They fund the services that give older people dignity, connection, and a sense of community when they need it most.

As we mark Dying Matters Week (4–10 May 2026), we recognise that thinking about your future is deeply personal. For many, there’s comfort in knowing their values will live on through the gifts they leave behind.

John, an MHA supporter and befriending service beneficiary, shared why this mattered to him:

“MHA helped me very much, and still helps me today. They’ve supported me along the way and so when updating my will, I wanted to ensure they would benefit.”

“I am repaying the generosity, support and goodness that they have offered me over the years.”

To find out more about leaving a gift in your will, or for support writing or updating your will using our Free Will Service

visit: mha.org.uk/giftsinwills
or call: **01332 221651**

or scan the QR code



Host a *Communi-tea Party.*



Help tackle loneliness in later life.

Put the kettle on, bring people together, and help make a real difference.

A Communi-tea Party is a simple way to bring together older people, neighbours, family or your local community for a cup of tea. By hosting one, you'll also be helping to support MHA's vital work across our care homes, retirement living schemes, community groups and befriending services.

Every cup can create connection

For many older people, a friendly chat and a shared moment can mean the world. Your tea party could help someone feel valued, supported and part of a community again.

It's easy to get involved

You can host your Communi-tea Party anytime, anywhere, in whatever way suits you:

- At home
- In your garden
- At work
- In your church or community hall.

Coffee and cake are welcome too.

We'll help you every step of the way

Download your free Communi-tea Party resource pack, including:

- Invitations and posters
- Fundraising tips
- Cake labels and games
- Ideas to make your event special

Together, we can make it matter

A small gathering can have a big impact. Thank you for helping older people live later life well, with friendship, warmth and connection.

Find out more and download your free pack at:

mha.org.uk/teaparty

or
scan the
QR code

