HAS CORONAVIRUS DISEMPOWERED OLDER PEOPLE?

Friday 4 December, 2020

The Older People's Advocacy Alliance (OPAAL), the only UK based national organisation supporting independent advocacy services for older people, and the National Coalition of Advocacy Schemes (NCAS), which promotes independent advocacy and provides a voice for community-based advocacy, are undertaking an exciting piece of research to identify some of the most disempowering aspects of the Coronavirus restrictions since March 2020 for older people.

OPAAL and NCAS have committed to undertaking an innovative research project to answer the difficult questions around how older people have been treated during the global pandemic. The aim of the project is to gather evidence to support claims that older people have been treated as the "discarded generations" during 2020, with their needs and wants overlooked and dismissed in favour of younger people.

Tough questions that the research will be exploring will include:

- How many people found that the blanket recommendation that everyone over 70 should lock themselves away prevented them from playing any positive role in caring for others in their community?
- How were they able to work around this – non direct contact etc?
- What were/are the experiences of families and friends who were/are prevented from visiting their loved ones indefinitely? How negative an impact has their absence had on the mental and physical wellbeing of their loved ones?
- Was there any effort to provide care homes with the support and equipment that would make visiting safe?
- What efforts were made by care homes to involve families and friends as much as possible during the lockdown via telephone, video etc?
- In which ways has the role of care staff both in residential care and at home care changed during the crisis?
- What was the impact on people of knowing that their loved ones were enduring lonely deaths in hospital and care homes?

The project team is looking to hear from a range of people across a geographical spread and is calling upon care home managers; relatives; pastoral workers; befrienders; hair and beauty workers, informal advocates and people living in care or supported living situations to provide evidence to this vital study.

Dave Bradshaw, OPAAL Trustee Board Member said,

"It is not acceptable to assume that a person's age automatically diminishes a person's value to society. We have so many examples of inspiring older people in our communities and yet in 2020 we have heard of countless examples of older people being excluded from so many things, ranging from decision making to companionship.

With this research we aim to arrive at a clear picture about how coronavirus has impacted on older people, and with that knowledge make positive steps to ensure any discrimination based on older age is eradicated."

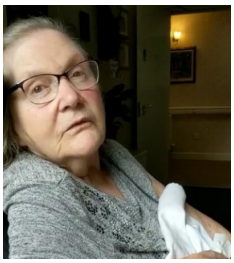
Anyone wishing to be involved in the research, please contact us at advocacynatcoalition@gmail.com.

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NOTES TO EDITOR

OPAAL is the only UK based national organisation supporting independent advocacy services for older people.

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NCAS promotes independent advocacy and provides a voice for community-based advocacy groups in England and Wales.

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