

Information Sheet

12 Holidays

Everyone needs a break from time to time, a chance to get away from their daily routine. However, it can be difficult to find information on holidays that cater for the needs of older and disabled people.

We hope this information sheet will help you to plan your holiday and make your holiday as trouble-free and enjoyable as possible.

Cc	nt	en	ts

Choosing a holiday

The range of holidays has never been greater. You could opt for a package deal in the UK or abroad, or book travel and accommodation separately. You could plan a holiday around an activity you enjoy, such as camping, caravanning, canal holidays, visiting historic sites, relaxing on the beach or pursuing an interest such as painting. Details of activity holidays can be obtained from national tourist boards, tourist information centres and travel agents.

Many holiday resorts in the UK offer a wide range of special concessions to retired people. These may cover various activities in the resort as well as the accommodation. Contact the Tourist Information Centre in the area you are interested in (see the 'Useful contacts' section on page 16 for national addresses).

If you are going on holiday on your own, ask your local travel agent for details of any tour operators which organise holidays that specifically cater for single people. If you would be interested in meeting a like-minded person to travel with, an organisation called **Single Living** can, for a fee, put you in touch with someone with similar interests (see page 9 for its address and for details of other companies which provide holidays for the single traveller).

Often holidays and coach tours are arranged on a local basis, so it may be a good idea to check in your local paper. If your budget will not stretch to paying for a hotel you could consider the possibility of a 'home swapping' holiday. Find out more from **Home Base Holidays** (see page 18 for its address).

Holiday planning

Before you go on holiday, it is important to plan things ahead, such as special dietary requirements and transportation to and from the hotel. If you would like accommodation to have an accessible bathroom, make sure you request this beforehand. You may find it useful to run through the checklist below, especially if you are going abroad.

- **Travellers' cheques**: Find out how your travellers' cheques could be replaced if lost, and take emergency numbers with you.
- Passports, visas and documents: Make sure your passport is still valid and check whether you need a visa to enter the country you are

visiting. Make copies of your passport, tickets and insurance documents, or store copies online in a secure place.

- Vaccinations and medications: For some countries you may need vaccinations, or a course of pills (anti-malaria, for example) before you go. Check with your doctor six weeks before your holiday is booked. Make sure you have enough of your regular medications to last your entire holiday.
- Insurance: Ensure you have enough insurance to cover you while you are away. Some holiday insurance policies offer only basic cover so make sure you take the time to research and shop around. The insurance you buy should be appropriate for the destination and for the activities you will be doing. Check the small print of your policy! If you are travelling to Europe, get a free European Health Insurance Card. You can apply online or find out further information by visiting www.ehic.org.uk You may still need travel insurance even with this card. See page 12 for more details.
- Contact details: Provide a family member or friend with a way of contacting you while you are away: for example, the name of the hotel where you are staying and its telephone number. Try and give friends an idea of your itinerary if possible. You could also register online with the Locate service so that the British Embassy can find you in case of an emergency. Go to www.fco.gov.uk/travel and click on the Locate button.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) runs a campaign called the **Know Before You Go** campaign; this provides information on how to be better prepared when travelling overseas and you can also check the country you are going to for up—to—date country—specific information. For more information on this campaign, visit its website on wwwfco.gov.uk/travel or contact the FCO on 0845 850 2829 (full address on page 18).

Keeping your home safe

When you go away on holiday you need to ensure your home is secure.

- Close and lock windows and doors. Don't leave spare keys anywhere near the house.
- Cancel milk and newspaper deliveries while you are away.
- Ask a neighbour or friend to collect your mail and open and close curtains. You may want to put your lights on an automatic timer.
- Put valuable items, such as jewellery and computers, out of sight.

Disabled travellers

When you are planning a holiday always contact the accommodation and transport companies well in advance to check that they are able to provide for any special requirements you may have. Invite a companion who can give you all the personal assistance you need and take any special equipment you require, as hotels are unlikely to have it. Remember to check that you have packed enough medication for your whole stay. It can be helpful to keep a note with you at all times of any medical conditions or allergies that affect you, and of any prescription drugs you take.

An organisation called **Tourism for All** can give holiday and travel information to disabled people, their carers and people on low incomes. Its address, and a list of other organisations which may also be able to offer advice, can be found on pages 6–8. To help you find somewhere to stay, you may find it helpful to look at the website **All Go Here**, a directory of mainstream hotels which are accessible to disabled people; the address of the website is www.allgohere.com

The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee has a transport and travel website for disabled and less mobile people. This website gives disabled people information and advice about travelling using all types of transport. The address of the website is www.dptac.gov.uk/door-to-door

Travelling by air

If you are travelling by air and you are unwell or disabled you might need extra help or different services at the airport and on the plane. To make sure that the airline knows what help you need, you might have to fill in one of the following forms:

- Incapacitated Passengers Handling Advice form (INCAD) If you are disabled, check with your airline or travel agent to see whether you need to fill in this form. It tells the airline of any help or services you may need during the flight.
- **Standard Medical Form (MEDIF)** If you have an illness or medical condition rather than a disability, check to see whether you have to fill in this form.
- Frequent Travellers Medical Card (FREMEC) If you fly frequently, it may be worth finding out if the airline offers this card. It is sometimes available to passengers with a permanent disability who have a stable medical condition, after an application has been signed by a doctor. The FREMEC saves the passenger from having to get a doctor's certificate to show they are medically fit for the journey every time they travel.

You should be able to get these forms from your airline or travel agent.

You may find it helpful to look at the www.allgohere.com internet website, which details the facilities airline companies can provide for disabled passengers.

Travelling by train

If you will need assistance during your journey, you must contact the train company at least 24 hours before you travel to make arrangements. It should be able to provide ramps and may be able to reserve you a seat or wheelchair space on the train. The National Rail Enquiry service on 0845 748 4950 will be able to tell you the phone number for the train company you will be travelling with. Further details are available in a booklet called Rail Travel for Disabled Passengers. It is free from most railway stations or can be downloaded from the National Rail website www.nationalrail.co.uk For information about the Disabled Persons Railcard call 0191 218 8103. Make sure you apply for the

Disabled Persons Railcard in advance of when you intend to travel; it can take up to two weeks for your application to be processed.

Travelling by car

If you will be driving abroad during your holiday, and you are a Blue Badge holder (the scheme for disabled people that formerly used orange badges), you may be entitled to take advantage of the national parking scheme in the country where you are travelling. A leaflet called European Parking Card for People with Disabilities is available to download from the IAM Motoring Trust website at www.iamtrust.org.uk

Useful organisations

The following organisations may be able to provide further information on holidays suitable for disabled people.

Accessible Travel and Leisure

Avionics House Naas Lane Quedgeley Gloucester GL2 2SN Tel: 01452 729739

Web: www.accessibletravel.co.uk

Travel service for wheelchair users or people with reduced mobility and their families and friends.

Assistance Travel Service Ltd

1 Tank Lane Purfleet Essex RM19 1TA Tel: 01708 863198

Web: www.assistedholidays.com

Helps to arrange holidays for disabled people and their families and friends.

Arthritis Care

18 Stephenson Way London NW1 2HD Tel: 020 7380 6500

Helpline: 0808 800 4050

Web: www.arthritiscare.org.uk

Operates hotels that have been specially adapted to meet the needs of people with arthritis.

Chalfont Line Holidays

4 Providence Road West Drayton Middlesex UB7 8HJ Tel: 01895 459540

Web: www.chalfont-line.co.uk

Specialises in holidays for wheelchair users and their carers.

Enable Holidays

26 The Green Kings Norton Birmingham B38 8SD

Tel: 0871 222 4939

Web: www.enableholidays.com

Tour operator providing information on overseas holidays for people with mobility problems and their families.

MIND InfoLine PO Box 277 Manchester M60 3XN Tel: 0845 766 0163

Web: www.mind.org.uk

Provides a factsheet on holidays for people with a mental illness.

Tourism for All

c/o Vitalise Shap Road Industrial Estate Shap Road Kendal Cumbria LA9 6NZ

Tel: 0845 124 9973

Web: www.tourismforall.org.uk

Has a wide-range of information and publications on holidays for disabled and older people.

Livability Holidays

50 Scrutton Street London EC2A 4XQ Tel: 020 7452 2000

Web: www.livability.org.uk

Runs hotels and self-catering properties for disabled people.

RNIB Leisure & Wellbeing

105 Judd Street London WC1H 9NE Tel: 020 7388 1266

Helpline: 0845 766 9999 Web: www.rnib.org.uk

Provides travel information including details of accommodation and holidays suitable for visually impaired people. Produces a range of factsheets, available via the helpline: RNIB Holiday Ideas 2008, Leisure Ideas 2008 and Helping You to Take a Holiday 2008.

Vitalise

Shap Road Kendal Cumbria LA9 6NZ Tel: 0845 345 1970

Web: www.vitalise.org.uk

Provides holidays for disabled people and their carers.

Youreable.com

Sterling Park
Pedmore Road
Brierley Hill
Dudley DY5 1TB

Tel: 01384 473 742

Web: www.youreable.com

Provides information on accessible accommodation in the UK and abroad.

Helpful publication

• Holidays in Britain & Ireland 2008: a guide for disabled people This gives details of the accessibility of a wide range of accommodation for disabled holiday-makers. For more information, including publication costs, contact: RADAR, 12 City Forum, 250 City Road, London EC1V 8AF. Tel: 020 7250 3222. Its website address is www.radar.org.uk

Single travellers

You may wish to go on holiday but not to travel alone, or you may wish to share your experiences with like-minded people. Many companies now provide holidays for the single traveller. Singles holidays are designed for people travelling alone.

The following operators provide holidays exclusively for the single traveller. The inclusion of a company's name in this information sheet does not mean that it is recommended by Help the Aged.

• Friendship Travel

Tel: 0289 446 2211; Web: www.friendshiptravel.com

Solitair

Tel: 0845 123 5515; Web: www.singlesholidays.com

• Travelone

Tel: 0870 787 5414; Web: www.travelone.co.uk

Just You

Tel: 0870 252 8080. Web: www.justyou.co.uk

If you would like to meet someone with similar interests to go on holiday with, you could contact **Single Living**. This company puts people in touch with a like-minded travel companion (but it is **not** a dating agency). For more details you can write to them, enclosing an s.a.e., at:

Single Living

Suite 33, 10 Barley Mow Passage London W4 4PH

Tel: 020 8762 9933

Web: www.singleagain.co.uk

Single supplements

It is possible that single travellers will be charged a supplement fee. This means that a fee will be charged for single people occupying a double room although there is only one person using it. There are ways to avoid paying this fee:

- By going on holiday at certain times of the year, usually the off-peak season.
- By sharing with another person on holiday. This could also be a good way to make new friends.
- By booking your holiday at the last minute. Prices can often be lower if you book close to the departure date.

Volunteering on holiday

There are many other options for the single traveller. You could act as a holiday guide for blind or partially sighted people in destinations around the world. For more information contact:

Vitalise

Shap Road Kendal Cumbria LA9 6NZ Tel: 0845 345 1970

Web: www.vitalise.org.uk

Alternatively, if you are feeling adventurous, you could try volunteering overseas. For example, you could be involved in conservation, community development or teaching projects. i-to-i UK can also provide details of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) courses. To find out more contact:

i-to-i UK

Woodside House 261 Low Lane Leeds LS18 5NY

Tel: 0870 333 2332 Web: www.i-to-i.com

Foreign currency

You can get foreign currency from banks, post offices and some travel agents, although some smaller post offices require you to pre—order. It is worth checking how much they charge because it does vary. You can also get travellers' cheques at these places, but make sure that you will be able to use your travellers' cheques in the country in which you are travelling to.

If you have a debit card, you can use this to withdraw cash from a cash machine in the country in which you are travelling to; make sure you find out what the fee will be if you do this. Also, the Post Office has a **Travel Money card**, which you can use to get money from a cash machine displaying the Visa sign. You will have to pay a transaction fee when using this, so remember this when using it. For more information about the Travel Money card, call the Post Office on 08457 223344. It is important to take a small amount of currency for travelling expenses and your immediate needs on arrival.

Holiday complaints

If you need to make a complaint about your holiday, you should bring it to the attention of the company's representative immediately. Fill in a complaint form or describe the problem in writing and keep a written record of all your discussions.

If the matter is not resolved immediately collect 'evidence' to show that you experienced the problem: photographs, for example. When you get home, write to the company explaining what went wrong enclosing copies of the photographs or documentation you gathered. State in your letter whether you expect compensation and suggest a realistic figure that you would be prepared to accept. Keep **copies** of all correspondence. If an acceptable outcome is not reached, you could think about taking an action against the company in the

small claims court or using an industry arbitration scheme. Contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau for more advice on this.

If you feel the description given by the travel agent or in the brochure was misleading, contact your local Trading Standards Department.

For more information on how to resolve a complaint, contact **HolidayTravelWatch** on 0121 747 8100. Its website is www.holidaytravelwatch.net

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing (ATOL) and Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA)

ATOL or ABTA may also be able to help you if you have difficulties with a holiday, either before or after you travel.

ATOL

The ATOL scheme protects many people who fly to its holiday destinations. Booking with a tour operator that has an ATOL number will protect your money if the company goes out of business before you fly. It also means that you will never be stranded if it goes out of business while you are away. If this happens before you leave, the Civil Aviation Authority will give you a refund. If you are abroad when it happens, it will arrange for you to finish your holiday and then fly home. For more information about ATOL or to get advice on resolving a holiday complaint, call its **Consumer Advice Helpline** on 020 7453 6424 or write to it at:

Consumer Advice, ATOL

Consumer Protection Group Civil Aviation Authority CAA House, 45–59 Kingsway London WC2B 6TE Web: www.caa.co.uk

ABTA

ABTA is a trade association for tour operators and travel agents in the UK.

If your tour operator is a member of ABTA, you are protected from losing any money should the operator go out of business before you travel. It will also arrange to bring you home should this happen while you are away. ABTA offers a **complaints procedure** in case you cannot resolve a grievance about the

holiday with your tour operator. Before booking your holiday it is a good idea to check that the travel agent or tour operator you are using is a member. For further details contact:

Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA)

68–71 Newman Street London W1T 3AH

Tel: 020 7637 2444 Web: www.abta.com

Medical treatment abroad

Your entitlement to free medical treatment abroad will depend on which country you are visiting. Before you travel you should check what is likely to be free and what you should expect to have to pay for. You should also find out what documentation you will need to show to get medical treatment if you need it while you are abroad. You can find this information in a free leaflet called Health Advice for Travellers which is available from the Department of Health publications line on 0870 1555 455.

If you need medical treatment in a country that is part of the European Economic Area (EEA), or Switzerland, you are entitled to the same health care as the nationals of the country where you are staying. You are likely to be asked to produce your passport and/or the European Health Insurance Card. The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) has now replaced the old E111 form.

The EHIC entitles you to free or reduced-cost medical treatment that becomes necessary while you are visiting an EEA country or Switzerland. The EHIC doesn't automatically entitle you to free health care in the country you are visiting. You will receive treatment on the same basis as an insured person living in that country. Countries within the EEA have different policies for UK residents receiving medical treatment while visiting their country. Make sure you find out what you are entitled to before you go.

To apply for this card call the **European Health Insurance Application Line** on 0845 606 2030 (your card will be delivered within ten days) or visit the website at www.dh.gov.uk/travellers

An EHIC is valid for five years. For further information about the EHIC, what to do if you lose it and how to apply for a new card, you can look in the Health Advice for Travellers leaflet mentioned previously or call the EHIC Enquiries Line on 0845 605 0707. You can also get an application pack from your local post office.

Some countries outside of the European Economic Area have arranged for UK visitors to get some medical treatments free or at a reduced cost. You will normally have to show your passport or other proof of identity which shows that you are a resident of the UK, such as a driving licence or NHS medical card. **Before any treatment begins, always check what you will be expected to pay.** You can find out which countries are part of this scheme and the services available in the leaflet Health Advice for Travellers.

Even if you are entitled to some treatment for free or at a reduced cost while you are abroad, it is always a good idea to get **medical insurance** before you go so that you are covered for all eventualities.

This is particularly important for people with a chronic disease or a pre-existing medical condition. If you are going to a country which has no agreements with the UK about medical treatment you will definitely need insurance. Ask your travel agent or insurance company for advice.

If you do receive treatment on holiday tell the doctor about any medication you are taking. **Keep all receipts** so you can claim the money back. EHIC holders should claim refunds before returning to the UK if possible and any insurance claims should be made as soon as you return. Remember to let your local holiday representatives know about the treatment and, if you are travelling alone, keep the names and addresses of friends or relatives in your passport so that they can be contacted if need be.

Holiday insurance

Often an insurance scheme will be offered as part of your holiday package (though it may not offer the cheapest way to buy such insurance). If there is, check that it will cover you adequately for the loss or theft of your belongings, delays or missed departures, cancellations and medical treatment.

If you would prefer to arrange your own insurance one of the organisations below may be able to help. The Help the Aged scheme is now run by intune (see below). To get a policy which offers the best deal for the insurance cover

you need, it is well worth shopping around and getting a few quotes before making your decision. Details of further companies can be found in your local Yellow Pages.

Age Concern Travel Insurance Services

Fortis Travel Insurance Fortis House Tollgate Eastleigh SO53 3YA

Tel: 0845 601 2234

*intune Travel Insurance

Tel: 0800 022 3176

Web: www.intunegroup.co.uk/travel

Value-for-money insurance with no age barriers.

*intune group Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of Help the Aged. Any profits generated from selling products or services go directly to support charitable activities.

If you have a long-term medical condition such as diabetes it could be cheaper for you to purchase travel insurance through the relevant organisation for your condition: for example, Diabetes UK.

Paying for a holiday

If you would like help with the cost of your holiday you may want to apply for a grant from a benevolent society. Our free information sheet no. 6, Financial Help from Benevolent Societies, contains guidance on how to apply for funding from these types of organisations.

Tourism for All produces an information sheet called Guide to Financial Help Towards the Cost of a Holiday, Respite Care or Convalescence. To order a copy, send £2.50 to Tourism for All. Its address is on page 7.

If you are disabled, you may be entitled to funding to contribute towards the cost of your holiday under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. For further information, contact your local social services department.

Travel concessions

If you are making your own travel arrangements, find out what concessions are available for older people.

If you are 60 or over you can buy a **Senior Railcard**; details of this can be obtained from main railway stations. Railcard holders may also be able to get fare reductions on trains in some parts of Europe. For more information, contact:

Rail Europe Ltd

Rail Europe House 34 Tower View Kings Hill West Malling ME19 4ED Tel: 0870 584 8848

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Web: www.raileurope.co.uk

Travel concessions can also be obtained on buses, coaches and ferries and from some airline companies. For more information, contact directly the company you plan to travel with.

You may also be entitled to a free passport. If you are a British national and were born on or before 2 September 1929 you can apply for a free ten-year UK passport. For more information you can call the **Identity and Passport Service Adviceline** on 0870 521 0410 or you can get an application form from your post office.

Pensions and other benefits

Holidays in the UK

If you are holidaying in the UK and can get your pension put into a Post Office Card Account, you can get your retirement pension at a post office in your holiday location. If you have enquiries about your Post Office Card Account while you are away, call the **Post Office helpline** on 08457 22 33 44. **This is not always the case for other benefits.** To find out how your other benefits will be affected you can contact the **Pension Service** on 0845 606 0265 or go into your local benefits office. If you plan to be away for more than two weeks, contact your local benefits office to make suitable arrangements.

Holidays abroad

Retirement pensions

If you are going abroad it is important to notify your local benefits office. Usually you will be able to let your pension build up and cash it when you get home or have it paid directly into a bank account. However, the way you claim your pension for the time you are away will depend on how long you are abroad. For advice on how to claim your pension, contact your local benefits office or call our free advice service **SeniorLine** on **0808 800 6565**. If you are in Northern Ireland, call **0808 808 7575**.

Other benefits

If you are going on holiday abroad and need advice on your entitlement to benefits while you are out of the country, contact your local benefits office or call our free advice service, SeniorLine. For a copy of the leaflet GAA5DWP, Going abroad and getting your benefits, call the Benefits Enquiry Line on 0800 88 22 00.

Taking your pet abroad

The Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) allows cats and dogs to travel with their owners to some countries and re-enter the UK without having to go into quarantine. It is best to plan well in advance, though, as it can take up to seven months for applications to be processed. Ask your vet for more information or contact PETS at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA):

Pet Travel Scheme (PETS)

PETS helpline: 0870 241 1710

email: pets.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Further information about the scheme can be obtained from the DEFRA

website: www.defra.gov.uk

Useful contacts

Tourist boards

Tourist boards are responsible for helping visitors to find out about events, facilities and services. They are involved in the development of amenities and are a good source of information about local services. Contact the appropriate regional board for details of the Tourist Information Centre in the area you plan to visit.

Visit Britain

Thames Tower Black's Road London W6 9EL

Tel: 020 8846 9000

Web: www.visitbritain.com

Visit Wales

Brunel House 2 Fitzalan Road Cardiff CF24 0UY Tel: 08701 211 251

Web: www.visitwales.com

Visit Scotland

PO Box 121 Livingstone **EH548AF**

Tel: 0845 225 5121

Web: www.visitscotland.com

Northern Ireland Tourist Board

St Anne's Court 59 North Street Belfast BT1 1NB Tel: 028 9023 1221

Web: www.discovernorthernireland.com

Other organisations

In this section we give contact details for organisations providing information and holidays. The inclusion of a company's name in this information sheet does not mean that it is recommended by Help the Aged.

Camping and Caravanning Club

Greenfields House Westwood Way Coventry CV4 8JH Tel: 0845 130 7631

www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk

Provides information on sites in the UK for people with caravans, motorcaravans, tents or trailer tents.

HF Holidays

Catalyst House
720 Centennial Court
Centennial Park
Elstree WD6 3SY

Tel: 020 8732 1220

Web: www.hfholidays.co.uk

Offers walking, cycling and special interest holidays, both in the UK and abroad. Also has country house hotels within the UK.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office Travel Advice Team

Consular Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Old Admiralty Building
London SW1A 2PA

Tel: 0845 850 2829 Web: www.fco.gov.uk

Provides information on all aspects of travel including how to get insurance and things to think about before you go.

Home Base Holidays

7 Park Avenue London, N13 5PG Tel: 020 8886 8752

Web: www.homebase-hols.com

Can provide information on 'home swapping' holidays in the UK, Europe and worldwide.

Jubilee Sailing Trust

Hazel Road Woolston Southampton SO19 7GB Tel: 023 8044 9108

Web: www.jst.org.uk

UK-based charity promoting the integration of able bodied and physically disabled people through tall ship adventure sailing holidays.

Ski Club of Great Britain

The White House 57–63 Church Road Wimbledon

London SW19 5SB Tel: 020 8410 2000

Web: www.skiclub.co.uk

Skiing holidays for the over-50s.

Wallace Arnold World Choice

62 George Street Croydon CR0 1PD Tel: 020 8686 2378

Web: www.waworldchoice.info Web: www.coachholidays.com (for specific information about coach

holidays).

Coach tours in the UK, Europe and worldwide. Also offers flights and package holidays.

Shearings Holidays

Miry Lane Wigan WN3 4AG Tel: 01942 824 824

Web: www.shearings.com

Coach holidays in Britain, Europe and Worldwide. It also provides package hotels and hotel breaks in the UK.

Thomson

Tel: 0870 165 0079

Web: www.thomson.co.uk

Offers city breaks, UK holidays, package and specialist holidays.

Waterways Holidays Limited

47 Station Road Aldershot Hampshire GU11 1BA Tel: 0870 126 3264

Web: www.waterwaysholidays.com

Provides information on holidays on the waterways of Britain.

For further information contact:

Information Resources Team Help the Aged 207–221 Pentonville Road London N1 9UZ

Tel: 020 7278 1114

If you have access to the internet you can download our advice leaflets and information sheets by logging on to www.helptheaged.org.uk

SeniorLine is the free welfare rights advice and information service run by Help the Aged for older people and their carers. Trained advice workers offer free, confidential and impartial advice about:

- welfare and disability benefits
- care at home
- residential care
- housing options and adaptations
- access to health and community services.

Freephone: **0808 800 6565**

Textphone: 0800 26 96 26

9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday

If you are in Northern Ireland, contact SeniorLine on 0808 808 7575.

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