



Letters from Lockdown

“I LIVE ON MY OWN AND LEAD A FAIRLY SOLITARY EXISTENCE, BUT I AM FAR FROM LONELY: ON A NORMAL WEEK I WOULD SEE A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE. THAT HAS OF COURSE CHANGED.”

At Ageing Better in Camden we firmly believe in amplifying the voices of older people in our communities. Now, more than ever, we strive to support our members to raise their voices and share their experiences.

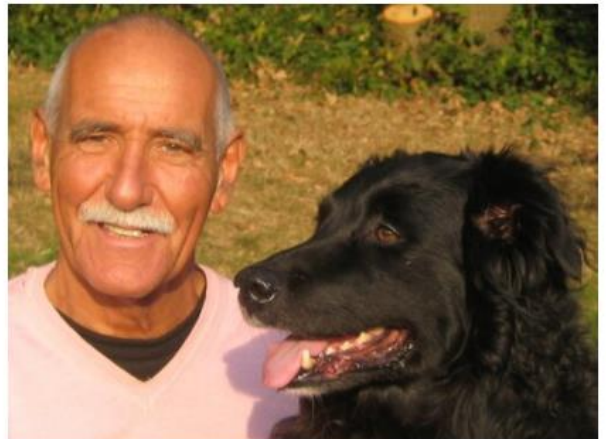
Far from being a great equalizer, the Covid-19 pandemic has revealed some of the deepest inequalities that have often remained hidden in our society. Our members have been writing a weekly newsletter for one another, to keep informed and connected in these challenging times. It has also brought us all closer together as we share our personal experiences of lockdown.

Here, Andrew shares his experiences.

Dear OPAG Friends,

Our existence has somewhat changed as we find ourselves pretty much locked up. So long as no-one throws away the key...

Celia mentioned last week the COVID-19 Symptom Tracker app, which I have used and which makes an important contribution to the understanding of the spread of this awful disease. It is simple, free to download and use. It takes about 10 seconds to report every day, 3 or 4 taps to answer simple questions. I have set a daily reminder on my phone. It is important to note that personal details remain anonymous and can be deleted on request.



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And so to me! My world collapsed with frightening speed: in less than 24 hours I had lost all my paid work scheduled to September and beyond. Voluntary commitments soon followed. Then concerts,

operas, lectures, exhibitions, outings, meetings, etc., all gone! My health is good (as far as I know!), leaving me more 'concerned' rather than 'worried' about this ghastly virus. I follow the precautions and do as we are told. So far, all good.

With so much free time, I thought I would tackle all those tasks and a long overdue clearing out for which one never has time. However, like most people apparently, I have not achieved much. I made a start on a vast number of books but digressed in glancing at a few pages: fatal! Mountains of old papers to sort out and shred. Housework: the kitchen looked so clean a couple of weeks back that I vowed never to use it again.

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I live on my own and lead a fairly solitary existence, but I am far from lonely: on a normal week I would see a large number of people. That has of course changed. My two great loves of music and travel give me plenty to do; whilst I can't indulge in the latter, I use my large music collection in addition to the very good Radio 3. I have no TV. I read, several books on the go, and spend too much time on that wonderful internet.

Apart from the odd food shopping outings, I take advantage of the permitted exercise time by going out on my bike, usually up to the nearby Heath, now looking lush and green, whose beauty never ceases to uplift me.

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On the far Highgate side, the rhododendrons are now in full bloom, a riot of vibrant colours. The heady sent of forsythias wafts on the breeze. Most people are mindful of social distancing, those courtesies at time quite funny, often met with a smile. I ride in an effort, not always successful, to keep calories and weight from creeping up too much. I exercise at home as well: no wonder those chores never get done.

But I feel absolutely fine and consider myself pretty lucky. I could do with more than distant hugs and kisses, meeting up with friends 'for real', live music and using the gym. I miss you too, our contacts and meetings, the voluntary activities – but they will return! A very small price to pay for the selfless efforts of all support staff, whose stories from friends are both enlightening and frightening.

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I would like to add that I'd be very happy to help with computer problems, queries you may have – although I am no expert. I would also be very happy to receive calls (phone, Skype, WhatsApp) if someone wanted a chat ABC can arrange.

Andrew

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