**PRESS RELEASE:**

**THE CARE CONVERSATION STARTER**

**www.agespace.org**

To celebrate the launch of their new Cambridgeshire online hub, Age Space, Britain’s practical advice site for the millions of families caring for elderly parents and relatives, is urging the country to #preparetocare. A new campaign to encourage families together with their relatives to take control of their welfare and care needs sooner rather than later.

Founder Annabel James explains:

*“1 in 10 people\* in Cambridgeshire consider themselves to be a carer which is why we are so pleased to be launching our new online hub to help families in the region. By bringing all the components of care together in one place, showcasing local organisations alongside expert advice, we hope to ease some of the emotional stress and strain of caring for an elderly relative.*

*Elderly care has certainly been the centre of attention over the last few months. Sadly, it has highlighted the desperate state of adult social care and has underlined just how much change is needed. For many any change will come too late.*

*#preparetocare is a campaign to challenge families to have the right conversations now and to put in place the plans for care so that when the unexpected happens, whether that be a sudden change in health or a national pandemic, they can make the best decisions with and for their elderly relatives. We have outlined five key conversations below that we want the nation to start having with their parents.”*

**1) MEDICAL HISTORY**

In an emergency it is vital to know what medication your parents are taking. Have a list on your phone detailing allergies, previous surgery, chronic conditions and current medication, especially if your parent is on blood thinners like Warfarin. This information is only recorded at the GP surgery, and is not accessible out of hours.

Print out the list and pin it to the ‘fridge in case you are not available during an emergency. Paramedics will have easy access to all the necessary information and will be able to make an informed decision.

**2) CARE OPTIONS**

There will come a point when your parents may need more help to live independently at home. Rather than wait for that day to arrive (trust us, they will need help long before they ask for it) you should have an open discussion about what care options are available. Depending on their medical needs, the three main options will be: 1) Moving in with you 2) Care in the home from a professional care provider or 3) Moving into a care home. All are costly, can be intrusive and will involve change.

Chatting through these options in advance will help you to prepare financially and mentally for when that day comes.

**3) MONEY**

This is a tricky one as many older people are suspicious of sharing their financial information. In many households the finances are controlled by the husband, leaving mum vulnerable. It is worth chatting about joint accounts and powers of attorney to avoid both parents being left at a loss.

Funding elderly care and later life can be complex and expensive, between £600 and £1600 per week depending on the type of care required and medical needs. A local authority care assessment will determine the care and support needed and how it may or may not be funded.

In England and Wales, if your parents have over £23,500 then they will be funding their own care either at home or in a care home. If cash and assets are between £14,000 and £23,500 the State and local authority will part-fund some care: less than £14,000 and all care funding will be provided by the local authority although this will be subject to their own weekly budget cap.

It is an incredibly unpredictable environment – you don’t know how long care will be needed and when those care needs might change. If you’ve already discussed the type of care your parents would be open to, we advise planning ahead and researching affordable local care options.

**4) LEGAL STUFF**

Check that your parents have written a will and that you know where the latest copy is. Discuss drawing up a Power of Attorney and an Advance Directive well in advance of potential need. Create a folder containing all important information such as Bank account details, National Insurance number, Passports, Driving Licence and vehicle ownership papers, Birth and marriage certificates and Insurance details including private health insurance. Log important numbers into your phone.

Passwords - this can be a legal minefield regarding agreements with providers and data protection. At the very least it is worth knowing the main login details and password to a computer as well as any details of online accounts and what is stored where on the computer (such as photographs.)

**5) GET SMART**

None of us want to ‘spy’ on our families so the prospect of monitors and call centres can be, quite literally, alarming. However, used in the right way at the right time such technology can play a vital role in keeping your parents safe and you in the loop. We encourage families to research and discuss Telecare options such as alarms, sensors, trackers and monitoring. Smart home technology and everybody’s friend Alexa can also help your parents to stay independent at home.

**-Ends-**

For further information contact Director of Communications, Marketing and Content Helen Burgess on 07881 523032 or helen.burgess@agespace.org

**Notes to editors:**

1. Age Space Cambridgeshire signposts to some great local groups and initiatives in the county, including Dementia Compass and Dancing with Dementia both profiled on the site.
2. 122, 757 people aged 65+ live in Cambridgeshire, around 19% of the county’s population (\*2011 census).
3. 7 million British adults aged 45 + currently care for elderly parents or relatives, set to increase by 20% in the next 15 years. (Age UK. 2017)
4. In response to the current Coronavirus pandemic, Age Space has created a dedicated COVID-19 section linking to the parent site [agespace.org](https://www.agespace.org/) and have released a FREE downloadable guide, packed with practical help specific to the elderly and their families. There is also a Facebook group ‘Supporting Elderly Relatives at Risk of Coronavirus’ – for daily advice and peer to peer support.
5. The national site was launched in 2016 by Annabel James after her Mum had a stroke and spent many weeks in hospital. Annabel felt overwhelmed and didn’t know what to do for the best for both parents, what questions to ask or where to look for information. Annabel realised that there were lots of people at this “age and stage” who were juggling work and families, perhaps while living at distance from their parents.
6. Alongside the national site there are 11 localised sites in Norfolk, Sussex, Dorset, Merseyside and Cheshire, Suffolk, Kent, Hampshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex and Surrey. Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Hertfordshire are due to go live before July 2020.