



# **THE ECHO**

The Magazine of the Elders Council of Newcastle

Issue 88

February 2020-April 2020

## **Conversations with the Elders Council**

We would like to hear more from older people in the city about what makes Newcastle a good place to live and what could be improved. With this in mind, we are planning a series of events during 2020, each of which will have a theme which we think is of interest to older people. The events will include presentations from interesting speakers, opportunities for you to share your views and ideas through informal conversations and the chance to meet new people.

Our first event will be held on:

**Wednesday 18 March 10.30 am-12.30 pm**

in The Bewick Hall, City Library. Newbridge Street West, Newcastle.

The theme of the event is 'Enjoying Parks and Open Spaces'. We know that being outdoors and enjoying the natural environment is good for our health and wellbeing. With spring around the corner, we would like to explore what enables you to enjoy the parks and open spaces in the city.



There will be an interesting line-up of speakers, including Barbara Hooper from Urban Green <https://urbangreennewcastle.org> (formerly the Newcastle Parks and Allotments Trust). And you'll have plenty of opportunity for sharing ideas and information about the places you like to go to and what makes them special.

If you would like to come along to this event, please let us know by emailing [info@elderscouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@elderscouncil.org.uk) or calling 0191 208 2701. Mention it to your friends – everyone is welcome! Transport can be provided if needed.

# The Elders Council in Action

## Housing, Health and Social Care Working Group

The Housing, Health and Social Care working group has set up a small task group to look at what we can tell you about personal support or home care.



As you know, the social care system is complex, underfunded and in urgent need of reform. There were promises during the election to change things but nothing has been proposed so far and we are not holding our breath! We can't make the politicians change their policies overnight but we can help ourselves and Elders Council members to find their way through the tangle.

The task group is currently exploring two different aspects of personal care and support at home. Everyone seems to have a different understanding of what help we can get if we need it so we are looking at common myths and perceptions about the system. We are also asking Elders Council members with experience of home care what key messages they think should be given to older people generally. We are very keen to find out what they have learnt and what advice or important information might be useful to anyone needing help at home.

Can you please help us? Do you have experience of the system (either as a carer or a user)? If so, would you please be willing to help us by responding to a few questions? These questions are not intrusive and we are only wanting to get your expert opinions! To discuss this further, do please get in touch.

The contact details are below:

- Telephone: 0191 208 2701  
(If there's no answer, please leave a message on the answerphone.)
- Email: [info@elderscouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@elderscouncil.org.uk)

**THANK YOU!**

## **Housing, Health and Social Care continued:**

We have also been fully occupied keeping in touch with developments across this broad agenda.

We have had presentations from Newcastle City Council on 'Being Well Newcastle' – a different approach to delivering home care. We have also had a meeting with the Adult Social Care Portfolio holder – Cllr Karen Kilgour – to find out more about the Council's priorities. This has all led to our setting up a task-and-deliver group to research personal support or home care. It is hoped to present group findings at a special meeting for members on health in May 2020. (See page 2 for details of this group)



**In relation to health**, we had an excellent presentation from the Ambulance Service about NHS 111: how it works and how to use it effectively. We also received a full update from Newcastle upon Tyne NHS Hospitals Trust on progress on improving services for older people and had the opportunity to raise issues which we think need to be considered.

If you have ideas about improvements that could be made to hospital services, please tell us.



**Our Housing Champions** met officers at Newcastle City Council to review Newcastle's position against the 'Seven Steps to Better Housing for Ageing' produced by the Older People's Housing Champions Network. This enabled our champions to give a full report at the national meeting in November and identify areas where we think improvements could be made.

**Future Homes Alliance** continues to develop and is about to take a major step forward by applying for planning permission for 65 units on the old Newcastle Brewery site. Next year will see the onsite start and some further positive results for the Alliance's fundraising efforts.

**Doorbells – Dreaming for the Future** We are currently working with Care and Repair England to fundraise so that we can put on more performances of 'Doorbells'. Working with our partners, Northumbria University, we have recently had an article on this project accepted in the *Journal of Advances in Housing and Healthy Ageing*.

The group is well represented on a number of local networks such as Healthwatch; Clinical Commissioning Group's Involvement Forum; and the Health and Wellbeing Forum run by Connected Voice.

Members of the group are also involved in a research project on double-handed care (care involving more than one carer) with Northumbria University and a project on malnutrition and frailty with Newcastle University.

We will be looking hard at the year ahead of us and how we can work effectively. Future meetings have been planned at two-monthly intervals during 2020, on the last Friday of the month. The first of these will be on Friday 24 January at Good Space on the second floor of the Commercial Union Building on Pilgrim Street. Timing will be as usual 10.30 am to 12.30 pm.

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## Milecastle Social Group

We enjoyed a 'bit of a party' when Sandy Irvine came to talk about the magic of the cinema and we guess lots of you remember those days of queuing to see the 'big' film; or with the 'continuous programme' starting to watch in the middle and then seeing it all through again. And we are positive that most of you will remember the Saturday morning/afternoon children's matinee with Roy Rogers or the Lone Ranger as well as the noise of hundreds of children!

Well, we were more refined and enjoyed a hot drink, mince pies and stollen cake whilst listening and remembering some of the joy of the cinema, including being terrified! **We meet the third Wednesday of each month at 10.30** in the Mile Castle pub at the corner of Westgate Road and Grainger Street.

The next sessions are:

<b>19 February</b>	Hobbies What do you do? Can you tell us about it and perhaps bring an example?
<b>18 March</b>	This meeting will be at the Bewick Hall in the City Library as the Elders Council is holding the first of the new "Big meetings". <b>Please see the front page.</b>
<b>15 April</b>	Limelight Theatre (to be confirmed)

As you can see, we have very interesting people to come and talk to us, sometimes helping us with how we are now and perhaps how we can improve the quality of our lives. Other times, it's just fun to enjoy an hour or so enjoying each other's company; swapping ideas; telling stories of bits of our lives or enjoying a quiz.

If you haven't been, please do give us a try. We do know that it's hard to take that first step but it will be worth it. You will be made to feel welcome and quite a few people stay and enjoy a meal together afterwards.

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## Older Voices

Last October, Arlind Reuter, a PhD student at Newcastle University, organised a two-day radio festival, which took place on the impressive Helix site.

Participants came from as near as the Universities of Sunderland and Newcastle and from further afield: London Metropolitan University, Sonder Radio (Manchester), East London Radio and Change AGENTS (Leicester).



We discussed, amongst other issues, community radio for older people and how to get and retain listeners. There was also a workshop on a programme called Radio Garden, which enables you to wander round the world listening to various radio stations and marking those you like. Just click on [www.radio.garden](http://www.radio.garden) and travel round the globe.

At the end of the event, we decided to set up a radio network for those interested in radio for older people; the first meeting of the network will be in York on Friday 7 February.

Meanwhile, we continue to broadcast on the first Friday of every month between 2 and 4 in the afternoon. We are not on air in January but resume on 7 February with a programme about transport and age-friendly cities. And on 6 March we have a programme looking at the issues arising from global heating.



You can listen to our programmes by tuning your radio to 102.5fm or by going to the station website: [www.novaradio.co.uk](http://www.novaradio.co.uk)

The photos are Halina interviewing and Eddie with Susan, all members of the Older Voices team.

## Older Person Friendly City

Recently the group commented on the Street Charter that will go to consultation in February 2020. We are working to help the city remain a safe and pleasant one and a great place to live and grow older. If you share this interest, why not join us and have a say?

The next meetings are on:

Monday 2 March, Monday 4 May and Monday 6 July.

All meetings start at 2 pm in Room 1, Good Space, 2nd floor Commercial Union House Pilgrim Street.



**Do you need help with  
Information Technology?**

Did you get a new phone or iPad for Christmas? Or have you made a resolution to learn how to use your phone or laptop more effectively? If so, the IT drop-in sessions at Northumbria University (Project ICE) could be just the thing for you.

You will receive 1-1 support from a student either using your own equipment or the computers available at the university. Weekly sessions will start again in the New Year. Please call 0191 208 2701 or email [info@elderscouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@elderscouncil.org.uk) to find out the details.

One satisfied member said: "It's marvellous. Everyone should have the opportunity to come. The students help you by raising questions you didn't know you needed to ask."

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## Blackett Street

As many of you will know, the Council wishes to close Blackett Street to non-essential traffic on a permanent basis. **The consultation opened on 10 January and will close on 31 January.**

If you have received this magazine too late to participate in this we understand this was an 'informal' consultation and a formal one will take place later in the year.

## Being a member of the Elders Council

“It is so good to be part of an organisation that wants to improve Newcastle and make it a great place in which to grow old. It’s nice to feel useful and help out in making a difference to quality of life such as making suggestions to companies to make public transport work better and understanding how the health and social care system works. It’s not work at all as there’s lots of fun to be had and the chance to meet all kinds of active people.”

Have you picked up this magazine at a library or community centre? Would you like to receive it regularly? If so, why not join the Elders Council? Membership of the Elders Council is free and open to anyone aged 50+ who lives or is active in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Members receive a copy of our quarterly magazine and, if you are on-line, you can also opt to receive our fortnightly e-bulletin. You can keep even more up to date by following us on Facebook.

As a member you are welcome to help shape the direction and organisation of the Elders Council and the way we do things. You can also participate in the projects we are working on or get involved in new activities; attend meetings and events and give a little of your time to helping us with the everyday work of the organisation, most of which is done by our members.

If you would like to know more, please ring us on 0191 208 2701 or email [info@elderscouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@elderscouncil.org.uk) .

### Quotes from members

“It definitely keeps my brain ticking over. I’ve learned such a lot that helps me now but also has given me knowledge that I can use if I need support and help later.”

“Waking up in the morning and knowing I have something to do that will be interesting and likely useful to share. Plus there’s time for a bit of chat and sometimes sharing a brief lunch with others – a bonus if you mostly eat alone”

## Members' story: A new job for Tony

This is Tony Huzzard, a member of the Elders Council. He is in the Active Voices programme and helped develop the songs for older people's day 2019.

As well as this, Tony really enjoys singing in a number of choirs. Apart from Tony's numerous choirs and other singing groups, he has now been engaged by the NHS as a volunteer solo singer.

At the start of this new career (at the age of 84), he has been asked to sing on various wards at the Freeman Hospital. He had three engagements in the hospital in December.

There's a significant amount of research into the value of singing; here's a quote from an article published in 2017 (*The Psychology of Music*):



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**“... it is apparent that social relationships, meaning and accomplishment are particularly emphasised as reasons why older people find singing in a community choir so beneficial for well-being.”**

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There are many community choirs in and around Newcastle with a wide variety of types and styles of singing so there's probably one out there that will suit you. Why not just ask around or check out what's available on InformationNow [www.informationnow.org.uk](http://www.informationnow.org.uk) ?

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**Watch this space!** Keep an eye out in the magazine and the bulletin, and Facebook (if you use it), for information about future events. Our front page tells you about the first of our conversations on 'Parks and Open Spaces'. Make sure you noted the date (18 March) in your 2020 diary!

Our second event will be held in May on the theme of 'Personal Care and Support at Home' and will include a report from our project group (see page 2). There's also an opportunity to join the project group and share your views.

## When am I eligible for my bus pass?

The Government has changed the age at which people become eligible for a bus pass. People no longer receive a free bus pass when they reach their 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. Instead, both men and women become eligible in line with the rise in the age at which women become eligible for a state pension. This rises on a sliding scale, from 60 to 66, between 2010 and 2020.

If you were born on or before 5<sup>th</sup> April 1954, you can apply for your bus pass immediately. If you were born after 5<sup>th</sup> April 1954, please see the table below to see when you are entitled to receive a bus pass.

If your date of birth is:	Your pass will start from:
6 May to 5 June 1954	6 January 2020
6 June to 5 July 1954	6 March 2020
6 July to 5 August 1954	6 May 2020
6 August to 5 September 1954	6 July 2020
6 September to 5 October 1954	6 September 2020
6 October 1954 to 5 April 1960	Your 66th birthday

The bus pass is not valid on the Metro so why not buy a **Metro Gold Card**?



A **Metro Gold Card** costs £12 per year. A single journey on the Metro can cost £2 or more, so if you make more than six journeys on the Metro, the Gold Card will have paid for itself. Sounds like a good deal!

You can buy a Metro Gold Card at any Nexus TravelShop (the Metro Gold Card will be loaded on to your bus pass) or any Metro station ticket machine.

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### Clean air

During the consultation on clean air in the North East in 2019, a total of 2,777 people took part and their feedback is now being analysed.

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## Helping your health and well-being

### **For your eyes only (glaucoma)**

In the Ian Fleming novels, it was all about secrecy but this information isn't a secret at all: the more that people know and understand its importance in helping to keep their vision, the better.

Glaucoma is the increased pressure in your eye that, if left untreated, may cause damage to your optic nerve, reduce your vision and can lead to blindness.



One type of glaucoma becomes much more common with increasing age. People of African-Caribbean origin are at four times greater risk of developing glaucoma, when compared with those of a European origin. The condition also tends to come on at an earlier age and

be more severe. People of Asian origin are at an increased risk of developing another form of glaucoma.

Regular testing is vital if visual impairment is to be avoided. When you have an eye health check, the optometrist must, by law, examine the back of your eye. This will include looking at your optic nerve. It is also recommended that everyone who is considered to be at risk of glaucoma (such as those people who are over the age of forty) have their eye pressure measured. If the results of either of these tests are inconclusive, your optometrist may also ask you to do a field-of-vision test to make sure that everything is normal.

Eye tests are free if you are over 60 or have certain conditions. You should have an eye test at least every two years and your optician may ask you to go for a check annually.

Unlike GPs and hospitals, opticians do not pass on your information if you change to another optician. Find an optician who you feel is right for you and stay with them if you are satisfied, as they will get to know you and your eyes.

Having your eyes checked and glasses changed, if needed, may also help you in keeping on your feet, as poor vision is the cause of many falls that older people experience.

## Eye drops

The dispensing bottles are not always well designed for those who have joint pain or little ability to squeeze; however, first of all read the instructions, then wash your hands. Sit or lie down and pull down the lower lid with a finger of one hand, squeeze or tap the bottle according to instructions with the other hand, and let the drop fall into the pocket between the eye and the lid. Close your eye and gently press on the inside corner with a finger for one or two minutes. This will help to slow the rate at which drops drain out through the tear duct into your system, so that it stays in the eye, where it is needed.

If you have to put in two drops, wait at least five minutes, or however long you have been advised, before putting in any other kind of drop to prevent the first one being washed away by the second drop. If you use contact lenses, never put a drop in your eye while wearing a lens and allow 15 minutes after using your drops before inserting a lens.

**Top tip:** keep the eye-drop dispenser in the door of the fridge (never the freezer) as you can feel them go in your eye more easily.

You can always ask for a different form of dispensing the drop if you can't manage with the one you have been prescribed. If you haven't used eye drops before, ask for a demonstration in how to use them.



The eye drops cannot cure glaucoma but they work to stop further deterioration. **Eye drops for glaucoma are a lifelong treatment** so it's important you know how to use them effectively.

If you use a computer, there are some helpful videos demonstrating how to put drops in eyes and of course much more information at [www.glaucoma-association](http://www.glaucoma-association) or on 0123 364 8164.

For more local advice and information about sight loss and low vision, contact **Newcastle Vision Support**, who are based in MEA House. The service is for all with some visual impairment; for example there is a group for those with macular degeneration.

The telephone number is: 0191 232 7292 and there is a website: [www.newcastlevisionsupport.org.uk](http://www.newcastlevisionsupport.org.uk) .

## Living made easier

Are you having problems carrying out day-to-day tasks? Is it difficult to get to the toilet, move around your home or go into the garden? Are you worried about slipping in the shower or managing the food on your plate? Your Equipment Newcastle helps you find and buy equipment to improve your daily living in just three steps:

1. Choose a topic.
2. Answer some questions.
3. Get a personal report and advice from occupational therapists on products that might help.



Newcastle City Council commissioned the Disabled Living Foundation (a national charity) to provide an online service for the residents of Newcastle. This service is Your Equipment Newcastle. You log onto the website and follow the instructions:

[www.youreqipmentnewcastle.org.uk](http://www.youreqipmentnewcastle.org.uk) .

You could go to the library to do this using their computers; the librarian will help you. Or you could ask a family member to work with you.



Newcastle Carers Centre based at 135-139 Shields Road also offer support around equipment that may be helpful.

They hold a monthly drop-in session on the last Tuesday of each month from 2-4 pm. These sessions are intended to be relaxed and friendly; there will be a member of the Occupational Therapy Team there for any questions you may have. There is no need to book; just call in.

There is a website (<https://www.newcastlecarers.org.uk/>) and a telephone number (0191 275 5060) if you have anything to ask about this.

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### **Newcastle Carers Men's Group** (based in the Carers Centre)

Are you a male carer looking after a family member, friend or neighbour? Come along to Newcastle Carers Men's Group for an opportunity to meet other male carers and take part in social activities; this friendly group enjoy getting out and about and trying new things! The group meet on the second Friday of every month. To find out more, please contact Newcastle Carers from the contact details above.

## Care home charter for medicines (adults)

You may know someone who is a resident in a care home. The following information may help them and their families and carers when discussing medicines. The information comes from the Patient Association website (the address is at the foot of this article) and you may find other helpful information there.

The Patients Association's care home charter was developed to improve medication practices for people living in care homes across the UK. Developed in collaboration with experts in health and social care and endorsed by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and the Royal College of Nursing, the charter aims to help support residents living in care homes to be actively involved in decisions about their care. The charter has been piloted in 22 care homes across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.



When you're staying in a care home, the Patients Association says that you can expect the people responsible for your care to:

- actively involve you in decisions about your medicines
- help and support you to make shared decisions about your medicines
- involve you in regular monitoring and review of your medications and make sure that you understand why this is being done
- make sure that medicines are given to you in a form and route appropriate to your needs and abilities
- make sure that medicines will be given only with your consent, unless you lack the capacity to give it
- respect the advance decisions or directives that you make regarding refusing medicines
- make sure that medicines are not given to you hidden in your food or drink unless it is in your best interests and all legal requirements have been met
- examine your mouth to ensure that your oral health needs are being met
- recognise when you are unable to swallow safely

You can contact the Patients Association by ringing 0800 345 7115 or by going to their website: [www.patients-association.org.uk](http://www.patients-association.org.uk) .



In case of emergency (ICE) app

The North East Ambulance Service recently gave an excellent talk to the Elders Council and advised those of us who have a smart phone to ensure that we use the ICE app.

(Please note: check your smart phone as it may already have an ICE facility built in. This can be checked for you by our fabulous student supporters!)

ICE is an app that enables people such as paramedics, firefighters, and police officers, as well as hospital personnel, to contact the next of kin of the owner of a mobile phone to obtain important medical or support information in an emergency. If you are unsure how to get the ICE app on your phone, why not call in to the aptly named Project ICE at Northumbria University? Help is available every Wednesday afternoon between 2 and 4 pm in Room 103 Squires Building, Northumbria University. Please let us know that you are coming by emailing [info@elderscouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@elderscouncil.org.uk) or call 0191 208 2701.

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## **Do you need help travelling to hospital?**

Ambulance transport is available for patients who have a medical condition which means they are unable to make their own way to hospital. If you feel that you need to request ambulance transport, please speak to your GP at least seven days before your hospital appointment.

If you are an older person, or have a disability, and have a bus pass or Metro Gold Card, just show your hospital appointment letter with your pass if you need to travel before 9.30 am to get to/from a hospital appointment.

See page 22 for up-to-date information from Stagecoach about your safety on buses and what they have done to improve it.

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## **Bottle in the fridge**

An alternative to the ICE app if you don't have a smart phone is "The Bottle in the Fridge". This is an initiative for an emergency information scheme that is currently provided free of charge by Caring Hands: [www.caringhandscharity.org.uk](http://www.caringhandscharity.org.uk) .



You complete the form with all of your relevant medical information and put this in the bottle provided, which you then place in your fridge.

You then put one of the provided stickers just inside your front door, so that it's clearly visible to any of the emergency services, and one of the stickers goes on your fridge. The green and white stickers are recognised by the emergency services.

You should not put a sticker on the exterior of your property. The emergency services will know to look for one inside your front door.

If more than one person in your household has a bottle, attach a photograph to the medical form, so that the emergency services can easily identify whose bottle it is.

Caring Hands are based in Shieldfield and provide many other services to older people living in the east end of the city. For example, there is a Handyman service. It is provided free of charge although there is a small administration fee (£8) and donations are welcomed. Demand for this service is high so you may have to wait unless special circumstances apply.

They will consider painting, garden tidy-up and those small repairs but all jobs have to be assessed. Please see what is available on their website [www.caringhandscharity.org.uk](http://www.caringhandscharity.org.uk) or ring 0191 261 5234.

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## **Age UK Gateshead**

Age UK Gateshead offer a programme of short and medium walks on Mondays starting at Gateshead Interchange (The Tyne Travellers) or long walks on Thursdays starting at Gateshead Interchange, Haymarket or Eldon Square bus station (The Age UK Striders).

If walking more is one of your New Year's Resolutions, here is your opportunity to walk in the company of others.

To find out more, contact Robin on 0191 269 2400 or 0793 535 7044.



BETTER is the UK's largest not-for-profit, charitable social enterprise and they manage the following leisure centres in Newcastle:

- East End Pool (formally Byker Pool)
- Eldon Leisure Centre
- Gosforth Leisure Centre
- Newcastle Trampoline Park and gym
- Walker Activity Dome
- West Denton Leisure Centre

Their fully qualified staff are on hand to offer help and advice as you achieve your health and fitness goals. Fitness Instructors are available in all six gyms and teach a wide range of classes to accommodate all fitness levels. In the pools, swimming teachers will ensure that you have the skills you need to feel safe in the water.

Fitness Classes: they offer classes **specifically for over-60s**, including aerobics, water workout, deep water workout, Zumba Gold, circuits (healthy living) and more. You could of course also attend other classes (e.g., group cycle, yoga, pilates, boxfit, power pump).

Age should not be a barrier to keeping fit, moving more and staying healthy. BETTER actively encourage people of all ages and all walks of life to come along and enjoy life at one of their centres, make new friends and socialise.

If you would like to find out more about BETTER leisure centres in Newcastle please visit the website at [www.better.org.uk/leisure-centre/Newcastle](http://www.better.org.uk/leisure-centre/Newcastle) or pop into one of the centres and meet the staff.

Have any of you used BETTER services? What's your experience of them? Contact us and let us know. We can feed back views to the company.

There are many other organisations that offer fitness and health activities as well as the above. The Eagles Foundation based in Scotswood Road has a programme aimed at older people. Newcastle United Foundation also offers activities for older people. As well as this, Age UK Gateshead have activity programmes for older people.

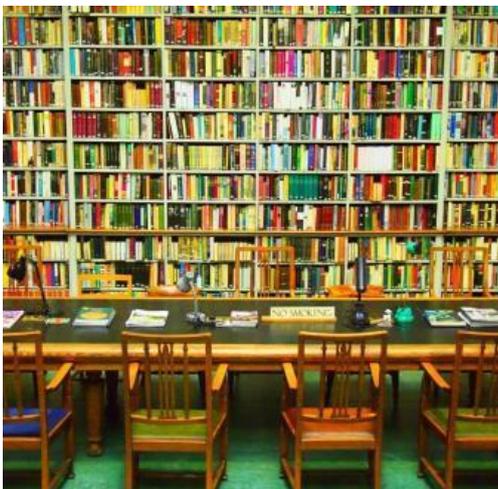
You should be able to find something that will please you as well as help you stay as active as possible and keep you connected with others.

## Culture and Arts

Culture comes in all shapes and sizes from graffiti art to fine art and from street dance to ballet there isn't one to suit all. We're featuring one or two that you might like to try out.

### Libraries

Have you been to the library recently? They are so very different from the libraries we once knew and used. There is so much more that older people can get from our libraries than in the past. For instance, we know of older people who use library computers free. Other older people call in for a cup of coffee and a chat and others join the variety of clubs and activities libraries are able to offer.



This is the Literary and Philosophical Library, Newcastle upon Tyne. The Lit and Phil, as it is known locally, has also moved on from being a "Conversation Club" to the busy place it is now with thousands of books alongside a wide range of events and activities. You can visit the Lit and Phil without being a member. They keep a large quantity of newspapers and magazines with comfortable seating. One member recalls meeting Anne Cleeves (author of the "Shetland" and "Vera" books, now both TV programmes). She was involved in talking about her writing.

Most of us older people will remember libraries like the one in this photograph: many books with a large dusty reference section where there were a few chairs and newspapers generally inhabited by older men. There was usually a children's library too, often in a separate room. You would see notices requiring you to be silent and receive stern warnings or hard stares if you made much noise. We expect many of you will have done much homework in a similar library.



Today libraries are very different: there are still many books but also computers that you can use, as our members tell us, completely free of charge. Generally, there's a photocopier and a

printer that you can use for a small fee. Books are returned and borrowed using an electronic system and you can borrow and return from any library in the city.

There are other stock items to loan such as audio books or large-print books. There are also eBooks and digital magazines to use. There may be a book club you can join or a story time for small children; some libraries host Knit and Natter groups. The West End Library has a community space used regularly by the local Historical Society.



In our larger libraries, the space is shared with other organisations. Some library buildings have become Community Hubs (like the East End Library and Community Hub) offering customer services such as housing and information and help. There's a Community Hub with a library in the West of the city too.

Another may share space with another organisation like the Dementia Advice Centre that's housed inside the Outer West Library. Do you know what's in your local library?

Branch libraries now have significantly fewer opening hours than in the past and that is something many of us regret. However, using the buildings more efficiently has meant that we still have libraries.



The City Library has a large café serving a range of food and other branch libraries often have tea or coffee available. Fenham Library has a small café with a limited selection of food but to have a bowl of soup at a table whilst possibly reading a book is a happy event.

Alongside that, of course, you have got yourself out of your home and have had an opportunity to engage with people.

The other big difference is that we are no longer required to be silent and that's probably a good thing (provided it's not a cacophony!).

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## **Theatre Royal Limelight**

Have you ever wanted and perhaps secretly yearned to act? The Theatre Royal may just have something for you. Limelight meets in term time and is for adults aged 55+. The following is a briefing of what is open to you and what it may cost.

**Ensemble:** This amateur theatre group meets on Wednesdays from 10.30 to 12 noon to learn acting skills and technique, work on texts and devise the group's own new work before performing to audiences in their Studio theatre.

**Day in the life of ...:** these friendly, informal sessions are held in the theatre's auditorium before matinee performances. They give members the chance to ask questions of guests from visiting production companies. The theatre gets a variety of guests – from the main star to the company manager, all of whom share anecdotes and tales of their time on their current production to their careers and lives. (These are on a Thursday at 11 am and you will be notified in advance of confirmed events.)



**Script reading:** the reading group meets on Tuesday mornings from 10.30 am to 12 noon, when members read a variety of texts, both classical and new and provide feedback on the work.

**Away days:** the theatre's Away Days give their members the opportunity to take part in activities and explore other cultural venues within the city.

Membership of Limelight costs just £40 per year. To join, please contact the Box Office on 0844 811 2121. For further information, please contact the Learning team on 0191 244 2513 or email [learning@theatreroyal.co.uk](mailto:learning@theatreroyal.co.uk) .



There are other opportunities open if you have an interest in theatre. The University of the Third Age (U3A) have a Sketch and Play Writing Group and they perform their own work. There's also a Shakespeare group, whose members, as the name says, read, declaim, discuss and play-read some of his work.

Why not visit either their website <https://u3asites.org.uk/newcastle> or ring them on 0191 230 4430 or visit the monthly meeting held every second Wednesday of the month at Brunswick Hall at 2 pm. You will be made welcome and may find a group to suit you.

We have also learned that **Jesmond** have started their own U3A group. This group is in the very early stages of development but they do have a website although no telephone contact.

<https://u3asites.org.uk/jesmond/welcome>

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The People's Theatre is always delighted to welcome new members. They welcome both aspiring actors and backstage crew. They offer more than the possibility of acting, so you can give yourself a challenge and do something different for the first time or pick up a skill you already have from set design to selling ice-cream in the interval.

New members' nights are held monthly in the Greenroom from 7.30 pm. Just go along, enjoy a tour of the backstage areas (wardrobe etc.) and experience some rehearsals. Then have a chat with some current members and get some details and costs. The next New Members Meeting: Wednesday 5 February at 7.30.

The People's Theatre is for all who are 16 plus, so you will be mixing with many age groups but all will have the same passions. It is worth going to a members' meeting for the tour alone.

For further information, please ring 0191 265 5020 or go to their website: <https://www.peoplestheatre.co.uk/get-involved> .

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**InformationNow** is also a rich source of finding things that interest you or tickle your curiosity.

Here are some areas of the site of things to do during these winter months. See if they inspire you.

Hobbies: <https://www.informationnow.org.uk/article/hobbies> .

You can also find lots of events and activities by searching on day or location or on a category such as: music, gardening, arts and crafts.

Or perhaps you'd like to think about cooking for a friend and sharing a meal together: <https://www.informationnow.org.uk/article/food-and-friends>

## Information and tips

### Wanna pension rise?

Average earnings went up last year by 3.9%. So your state pension will rise by 3.9% in April. This is because of the triple lock: whichever of price inflation, earnings growth or 2.5% is the highest in September governs what increase you get in your pension the next April. And this last year it was earnings growth. Spend it wisely!

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### Don't charge your phone overnight

**Sorry.** Extra energy doesn't equal extra whizzy super powers (nice as that would be). Most mobile phone are fully charged in under two hours. But in Britain we waste money and energy charging them all night. Don't. We all need our **zzz!**

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### Re-use, reduce and recycle

The city has recently changed what can be put in your recycling bin and there's quite a lot more that can now be recycled. This is from the council website, which can give you much more information. Here is what you can now put in your **BLUE** bin:

- Empty aerosol cans
- Cartons and cardboard egg boxes (flattened)
- Plastic bottles (flattened, with tops replaced)
- Washed and dried margarine tubs, yoghurt pots, meat trays or fruit punnets (no black plastic)
- Cardboard (flattened)
- Newspaper, magazines and paper (no plastic-coated paper, no shredded paper or bound files)
- White and brown envelopes – it doesn't matter if they have windows or not
- Telephone directories and Yellow Pages
- Food and drink cans (rinsed and squashed)
- Foil and foil trays (rinsed)
- Biscuit tins and plastic chocolate tubs



Use the black caddy inside your blue bin to recycle rinsed glass bottles and jars (**not** Pyrex glass, drinking glasses, broken window panes, mirrors).

## Stagecoach North East



Stagecoach North East has introduced a new initiative designed to ensure passenger safety while buses are in motion, and has rolled out the project throughout its operating area; in Newcastle, Sunderland, South Shields, Teesside and Hartlepool.

Having recently identified unseated passengers as a primary cause of on-board incidents, the newest element of the overarching DriveSafe campaign **encourages passengers to remain seated until buses have come to a complete stop.**

Over a thousand local drivers have been instructed to listen for the bell, bring the bus to a stop and wait for passengers to alight at a comfortable pace. Drivers have small prompt cards to distribute to more vulnerable passengers and all seat backs are now fitted with instructional vinyls.

In a further boost to Tyneside bus services, Stagecoach North East has announced the introduction of 23 brand new buses to its Newcastle fleet.

After an investment of £5.2 million, the new double deck ADL MMC Enviro 400 buses will operate up to every six minutes as Stagecoach service 39/40, connecting the communities of Dumpling Hall, Chapel House, Fenham, Byker and Wallsend. Operating from the company's Walkergate depot, the buses will feature state-of-the-art Euro 6 engines equipped with Stop-Start technology and next-stop announcements with scrolling LED displays.

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### Age UK Gateshead in Newcastle

Age UK now have a presence in Newcastle in the Grainger Market (Alley 4). They are based in the unit which was formerly the Age UK Insurance Office [please note that the insurance office no longer operates from this office. For information about insurance go to [www.ageco.co.uk](http://www.ageco.co.uk)].

'Age UK Gateshead in Newcastle' office will be open from Monday to Wednesday from 9.30 am to 3.30 pm and on Fridays from 9.30 am to 12.30 pm. It is closed on Thursdays. Staff will be on hand to offer you advice, information, signposting and answer general enquiries; they can make appointments for specialist advice on Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payments and Disability Living Allowance claims. For further information, please contact 0191 477 3559 or email [Info&Advice@ageukgateshead.org.uk](mailto:Info&Advice@ageukgateshead.org.uk) .

## Donations and Gift Aid

Your generosity can help us make a difference. Your generous donations help the Elders Council to continue to provide the full range of activities which you can read about in the magazine. If you would like to donate on a regular basis, you could set up a standing order. Request a form from the office.

Over the years, some members have chosen to leave the Elders Council a legacy. By deciding to remember us in your will, you can really help the Elders Council to continue its work.

Give as you live: please help the Elders Council by logging on to [www.giveasyoulive.com](http://www.giveasyoulive.com) every time you shop online and nominate the Elders Council as your chosen charity. It costs you nothing and we receive a small percentage of the sale. Charity: **The Elders Council of Newcastle Ltd.**

I wish to donate £7.50 [ ] £15 [ ] £30 [ ] other [£ ] to the "Elders Council of Newcastle" and enclose a cheque for that amount. Please send to the Elders Council office (the address is on the back page).

Name:
Address:
Post code:

If you would like us to claim Gift Aid relief, please complete the relevant boxes below:

I confirm that I have paid or will pay an amount of income tax at least equal to the amount of tax that the charity will claim on my gifts.	
I confirm that this donation and all previous and future gifts of money to the Elders Council should be treated as Gift Aid donations.	
<b>Signed</b>	

## Magazine Information

### Magazine articles

If you would like to submit an article to be considered for the April/May edition of the Magazine, please ensure that you send it to us by Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March at [info@elderscouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@elderscouncil.org.uk) .

### Magazine in other formats

We can make our magazine available in alternative formats (e.g., in larger print or on audio tape or an audio CD). Please just let the office know what format you would like.

### Electronic version of the magazine

If you have received this copy of your magazine through the post, it will have cost the Elders Council about £1.35 to send out it out to you. So, would you be willing to have the magazine sent to you electronically? If you would, it would save a lot of money every year. So please sign up for this service now by emailing [info@elderscouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@elderscouncil.org.uk) ; please put "E-mail Magazine" in the subject box. Advantages to signing up for this service include receiving the magazine at least 14 days sooner than you would normally receive it via the post and getting earlier notice of events happening throughout the city. What are you waiting for?

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Facebook: [:Elders Council Facebook Page](#)

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