



# ***The Echo***

**The Magazine of the Elders Council**

**Issue 107**

**November 2024 to January 2025**

## **Three cheers for the Elders Council! Hip, Hip Hurray!**

If you have ever wondered if the Elders Council makes a difference, here is a great example! Last year, we were asked by a national research project (based at the University of York) to comment and advise on information leaflets and videos that would encourage older people and their families to take up offers of reablement services. The Elders Council was even given funding to do this work.

Reablement is an intensive and short-term support service provided by the NHS and local authorities that might be needed after someone is coming out of hospital. It's sometimes called "free home care" as there is no cost for a few weeks but its purpose is to help you regain your independence in your own home. It evolved as a service from the old-style intermediate care.

There are many reasons why older people don't want reablement so there is a real push to raise awareness of the service and improve information. The Elders Council set up a small group of members to look at and advise on existing leaflets and videos across England. We were asked what a good leaflet and video might look like and what would appeal to older people and families. This took a lot of thought and discussion but we came up with detailed comments and recommendations that were written up and given to the project leaders. Thanks to Steve, Mary, Diane, Anne, Anita and Alan for all their contributions.

Now national guidance on all this has just been published

by SCIE – the Social Care Institute of Excellence (a national organisation that promotes best practice in social care). We are so



pleased that our contribution has been fully recognised and acknowledged. We were mentioned in the launch event of the guidance but you can find out more if you click on the link below. If you scroll down to sections 6 and 7, you will see the Elders Council views quoted.

<https://www.scie.org.uk/integrated-care/intermediate-care-reablement/supporting-client-and-family-engagement/>

## **Julie Irvine**

---



In summer this year, Newcastle upon Tyne hosted the 53rd conference of The British Society of Gerontology (BSG). The BSG provides a multidisciplinary forum for researchers and other individuals interested in older people, and in how knowledge about ageing and later life can be enhanced and improved.

Anne Raffle, our chair, was invited to the opening ceremony and asked to give a short welcome to delegates from across the world. This reflected how well Anne is regarded from the previous conferences she's attended and research contributions she has made. It is also a measure of the impact of the work of the Elders Council and Anne highlights some of this below.

"As a born and bred Geordie, this was an honour for me as well as the Elders Council. Government-led pilot schemes in the 1990s encouraged older people to become involved in decision-making about their own future; many of you will remember the phrase "Nothing about us without us". This work led to the development of the Elders Council around 24 years ago.

Since 2014, the Elders Council has also championed the World Health Organisation (WHO) Age Friendly City and Communities network, collaborating with our universities, city council, public health and other partners to maintain and drive forward the challenges older people face.

It was a benefit that I was able to speak from personal experience at the event about the rich and rewarding opportunities participation in research brings.

I was delighted to receive positive feedback from some of those attending the ceremony and, by joining a few of the individual research sessions afterwards, I had a very full and interesting day."

## **Anne Raffle**

### **Friendly Neighbourhood Get Together**

**11am – 1pm Wednesday 13th November**

**Robert Stewart Memorial Church Hall, Wingrove Road**

An informal, friendly meet up organised by the Elders Council.

Meet staff and members, have your say about the city's Transport Plan, information and advice from local orgs, and more.

## **New Trustees**

Welcome to our 3 new trustees who have joined the Elders Council Board, bringing valuable knowledge and experience as the organisation empowers older people with voice, confidence, and influence.



### **Sylvia Leigh**

I have spent many years serving the North East community in various capacities. As a City Councillor, I answered the queries of constituents, resolving problems by liaising with the Council. I served on several committees, including Finance and Social Services. Through this latter committee, I inspected residential homes for the elderly and remedial schools, becoming a governor at both comprehensive and junior schools. The latter brought me, as a Council representative, to Axwell Park, [Clavering House] Approved School, where I became Chairman. During my tenure, I oversaw the sale of Clavering House, which became St Nicholas Educational Trust, and I was ultimately responsible for guiding the trustees in managing a fund of some £2,000,000, the interest of which goes to support local young people under the age of 25 from disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve their goals.

I was one of the founders of the Northumbria Speakers' Club, which encouraged women to speak in public. I am founding Chairman of

the Tyne and Wear Branch of the European Union of Women, a European-wide NGO, established in the North East since 1994. The Branch is flourishing, bringing in prominent speakers to lecture on subjects of importance. As a mature student, I took a degree at Northumbria University, and graduated in English, History and History of Ideas. If I have any spare time, I enjoy a game of bridge.

I hope that my experience and the knowledge I have gained through the years will be of value to the Elders Council. I look forward to working with my fellow trustees to make Newcastle a genuinely Age Friendly City.

### **Farida Rehman**

My dad retired from the army and came to the UK in 1969. I was 10 years old and had four siblings. We were raised in Blackburn and went to school there. I worked in Blackburn as a community worker to help with the language barrier. I got married in 1976 and moved to Newcastle in 1984. We have four children.



I became a volunteer in an Asian carers group and, in 1999, I started working with West End Community Wardens, which later became West End Friends. My job was to work with the South Asian older community, helping them overcome their problems by referring them to or networking with other agencies.

I enjoyed working with people and assisting them, particularly as these were individuals from the first generation who came to Britain with the intention of making money and then going home to their country. Unfortunately, this did not happen, and many of the men didn't think to teach their wives English. Sadly, when the men passed away, most of the women we worked with were lonely, isolated, and needed support to live independently in their own homes.

My job was to go out, assess their needs, and introduce volunteers who shared the same language and culture. This might mean going to a hospital appointment with them or reading letters and often advocating for them.

I was keen to get involved with the Elders Council because the charity provides a platform for older people and is aware of their

problems and issues. I have particular experience too with the South Asian community. The Elders Council can make sure that we older people are heard; it can also inform people of what is happening in the community and what their rights are.

### **Sue Harrop**

Hello, my name is Susan Harrop and I have been a member of the Elders Council for a couple of years. I was lucky enough to join an Active Voices course organised through the Council, which led me to becoming more involved with the important work this organisation carries out.



I retired at 60 from a career in Early Years Education and Childcare, latterly working developing Sure Start and young children and family services. These were focused on providing positive experiences for very young children and their parents and carers and there was a requirement for taking part in research to show the outcomes from the services provided. This research was evidence-based, which I was able to appreciate having years ago taken a sociology degree. Research is therefore an interest of mine which I hope can be helpful in the way I can contribute to the Elders Council.

I have three children, all brought up in Newcastle (and very positive about that), and four grandchildren, who keep me busy. I have a wide circle of friends, mostly retired and interested in issues around ageing. I volunteer for a charity book shop and enjoy reading, writing and film-going.

---

### **Noisy neighbours**

Sometimes we receive letters from members who are keen to pass on information gained from a recent experience and this is one of those. Jim wrote explaining he was having difficulties with noise from a neighbour that happened at the same time each evening and prevented him from sleeping. He did his best first to ask for the sound to be turned down and after that failed, he contacted the police. The police couldn't be involved as it isn't a criminal matter.



Noise nuisance is a civil problem and this is how you deal with it. First you try speaking to the person causing the problem in a calm and polite way. If this fails you report it to Newcastle City Council <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/environment-and-waste/environmental-health-and-pollution/noise/noise-nuisance>

Phone 0191 278 7878. They will ask questions and will write to the people causing the problem. There are further steps, you may be asked to keep a diary to show the frequency of the problem. They can also install sound recording equipment if needed.

It does take time but most problems are resolved before this. Jim's problem was resolved. He did use a diary to note the date and time of the noise and sound recording equipment was used to show the noise level was unacceptable.

Thanks Jim for passing this information to us.

### **Elders Council Needs You!**

Many people have made a contribution to this magazine, you can see some of the names with the article they have written. We need more of you to help and there are many ways you can from writing an article to helping with getting the print copies out. Please don't leave it to that famous 'someone else' to do it it's you we need. Be brave and give us a call and make us an offer- we won't refuse!

We receive kind messages like this one -

'I really appreciate all the work that goes with producing the excellent magazine'

We really need more **ACTION!**

### **OLDER VOICES has moved!**

*Older Voices*, your weekly radio show has moved to a new station and a new time. You can now find us on **Radio Tyneside** on wavelength 93.6fm from 7 to 8pm on Wednesday evenings.

We started in our new home in August and we now have a one-hour programme but it's still as rich and full as it always was. Tune in, listen in and enjoy! If you want to listen to past programmes, please go to <http://www.mixcloud.com/LLARC> .

# Performing Arts

## Changing hearts and minds

Just as a picture may speak a thousand words, so a piece of drama can make you see and understand things differently, changing hearts and minds. Using drama to convey key messages has been a part of the Elders Council's work over many years. Some of you will remember the songs and sketches from the *Old Spice* drama group; others participating in workshops leading up to the development of [Doorbells](#) or contributing to [Managing the Home Care Circus](#) and, more recently, engaging with Unfolding Theatre on [Just Us](#).



Whilst writing reports and doing formal presentations on the issues that matter to us are important, turning our views into performance can have much greater impact. How many of us really understood the Post Office scandal as it rumbled on in the background until we saw the television series? The dramatisation brought it home to us in a way that we can never forget, speeding up action and recompense.

We can all have a role in producing powerful theatre – whether we participate in the research that underpins the drama, or work alongside the performers to develop ideas, or perform the drama ourselves. Performance does not have to involve the spoken word. At the Elders Council's AGM in July, we saw a beautiful performance by the [Company of Others Ensemble](#) which was another expression of ageing. There are lots of opportunities for us to discuss, debate and contribute. The performances themselves provide another opportunity to discuss our views with those who come as audiences, giving us more scope to raise awareness of what matters to us and enable others, for a short time at least, to see the world through our eyes. Whether as a participant or audience member, it's always a learning experience and an enriching one.

## Creative Ageing Network

I currently represent the Elders Council on the national Creative Ageing Network. The group meets on-line and is developing a Manifesto for Creative Ageing. If you would like to get involved,

please contact the Elders Council's office on 0191 208 2701 and we will send you more information.

**Barbara Douglas** Photo: title card from the Wikipedia website

---

## **Spirit of Rebellion! Our Voices Were Heard**

Developed by Unfolding Theatre and Elders Council members this piece was performed in October to celebrate Older People's Day and aimed to challenge the stereotypes of older people and highlighted the role we play.

The stories and songs performed by the group alongside 'A Band Like This' included their own songs intertwined with renditions of classics "9 to 5" and "In the Ghetto". Audience members enjoyed the true reflection of things that had happened in our lives and we had forgotten about like the 3-day week and the Poll Tax.



Audience members created their own placards of issues where they want change. The performance showed us that protest sometimes is successful and can bring change, however modest. You just have to give it a go if you care.

*"An excellent show".*

Photo: Von Fox

**John T White** writes here about the background to the performances that evolved with the group of older people who came together to meet Unfolding Theatre at their taster sessions that were organised by the Elders Council:

"Meeting each week at Montagu Residents Association over the summer we soon got into the Theme of Rebellion/Protest of our "well spent" youth. Our input offered the timelines of the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s to date. Having all had experiences of "protest" during those historically momentous years. We also expressed appreciation for generations of the 30s, 40s and 50s that fought for the freedoms and democracy that allowed the movements and expressions that we lived through.

So, given the era we chose we listed so many events that warranted the unfurling of banners and flags to protest and to rebel against government decisions if we thought these not compatible. For the



common good. Basically, we as Elders have experienced the trials and tribulations of protest and freedom of expression. We have the "T-shirts" and wear them with pride. Hopefully an outcome of our drama will be to record it and later present this to the current generation with the explanation that we are aware of events today, we feel their pain, we have their anger...we salute them as they carry the Banners for Peace.

It is often said "History Repeats" unfortunately so...but in the Words of John Lennon "All We Are Saying is Give Peace a Chance."

---

### **Cinema goer**

I greatly enjoy going to the cinema to see a raft of different films. My cinema of choice is the Everyman directly opposite the Theatre Royal. It boasts four screens in differently-sized auditoriums and shows a range of films to suit every taste. The seating is extremely comfortable as its couch-style with plenty of room and space.

The Everyman also have live satellite links so I can enjoy ballet and opera that I can rarely afford to see live in London. They have theatre live links from the National Theatre too so I can see performances from there as well.

Two notable live links I've seen recently are *Swan Lake* from the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and a National Theatre live link *Nye*, played by the incredibly versatile Martin Sheen. Both performances were superlative, very uplifting filling the senses with joy and artistry. But the cinema also brings a shared experience with the other people in the auditorium, which enhances the overall enjoyment of going.

The staff of the Everyman are very welcoming and friendly and will serve food and drink to you at your seat, which is an added bonus to a cinema outing. The cinema has various packages to suit your individual financial pocket or you can just pay as you go as at any other cinema. They also offer "Silver screening" at a reduced price for anyone 55+ There is also free tea and cake at these screenings.

My last cinema visit was to see *Twisters*, which was a gripping tale of tornado chasers and a love story to boot! Why not give it a try at



the cinema closest to you? Perhaps you'll become a regular attender getting a huge amount of pleasure from what is on offer.

**Jean Monaghan** Image: Everyman website

**Note from the editor:** There doesn't seem to be a fixed day for the silver screenings. We suggest you phone the theatre: 0123 355 5642. This not a local number.

---

## Going to the Pictures

Talking about cinema visits recently with my brother made me think of visits to the 'pictures' as a child in the early 50s. As a family we went to the Pentridge, always to the first house. Mum and dad and my two brothers and me walked there calling in at Nutall's sweet shop, where mum used the rations to buy a quarter of Nutall's mints and a quarter of fruit jellies.



At the pictures we sat near the front in the stalls, an usherette used her torch to take us to the row of seats, red plush as I remember. The darkness added to the atmosphere of expectation and a willingness to be properly thrilled.

It was at the pictures we saw many war films made in Britain. I think I didn't really pay much more attention (the war was ever with us when people talked) than to know the ending was with a win for us. I looked forward to those big screen musicals in colour, that was a treat. The one I remember most clearly was 'Singin' in the Rain' with Gene Kelly and Debbie Reynolds. I think I danced and sang all the way home.

We did, as we got older go to the children's screening on Saturday morning when we joined hordes of other kids shouting and yelling throughout the auditorium and always with the film shouting for the 'goodies. Here it was mainly cowboys and Indians with Roy Rodgers and Trigger or The Lone Ranger and Tonto. I think it cost 3d or 6d. Seeing any of those films I saw as a child does bring back many happy memories and includes things such as once again feeling that scratchy plush at the back of my legs!

**Mary Nicholls** Image: a poster advertising the film

## Ballet Lorent

Can you Knit or crochet? Ballet Lorent may be just the place for you. Ballet Lorent is based at the John Marley Centre, just off Whickham View. There's a group, the 'Movers and Shakers', who



meet on a Friday morning and create props for our productions, along with an exercise session. It's free to join. There's tea and biscuits and an opportunity to make friends and find out a bit more from the backstage.

If dancing is more for you, Ballet Lorent have a Dance Creative class on Mondays. This class is a 60-minute easy, gentle movement class to music

designed for over 40's to unleash their creative force and discover the joy of moving. There's also yoga on a Monday, it's for all ages and Debbi the class tutor offers adaptations if needed for those less confident or stretchy!

Tuesday at Ballet Lorent it's 'Grown Up Ballet', this class has a range of ages in it, the eldest is 80! All are welcome. You can relive your dreams of when you first had ballet lessons and start moving in a graceful and balanced way.

If you look after your grandchildren there's a parent and toddler class on a Wednesday morning, All the classes are charged but it's a fairly small amount.

**Jane Coney, Ballet Lorent** Image: Ballet Lorent website

---

## Gosforth Civic Theatre

You may have visited Gosforth Civic Theatre, opened in 2016, it's an independent arts venue, café bar, events space and community hub next to Regent Centre Metro Station and bus interchange. It has a programmes theatre, live music events, and diverse performances while running a lovely and very accessible café bar six days a week. There is also a programme of community activity for young people and adults.

It was founded by disability arts charity Liberdade community development trust in 2003 and helps learning-disabled young people. The theatre and café provide opportunities for learning disabled young people to learn skills in theatre and hospitality. Company members play an essential role in the governance and



future direction of the enterprise. The money raised from the café bar, space rents and ticket sales help fund these opportunities.

You can find out more by visiting the website

[gosforthcivictheatre.co.uk](http://gosforthcivictheatre.co.uk).

### **Scott Forbes, Gosforth Civic Theatre**

Image: shows the café and is from their website

## **Information**

### **Pension Credit: what is it?**

It's a benefit designed to help older people with the cost of living. 'Older' means over your state pension age, although you don't have to be getting state pension to claim it. Pension Credit tops up your income to:

- £218.15 a week if you're single
- £332.95 a week if you're a couple

You don't have to be married or in a civil partnership to count as a couple – you can simply be living with your partner. And it's possible you could get more if you have a disability, are on certain benefits or have caring responsibilities.

You could qualify for Pension Credit if **you're 66 or over** and your total income is less than £200 a week. Pension Credit takes your income into account – but not everything counts as income.

These **aren't** counted as income:

- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Reduction
- Child Benefit
- Attendance Allowance
- Adult Disability Benefit
- Personal Independence Payment
- Christmas Bonus
- Social fund payments, such as Winter Fuel Allowance and Cold Weather Payment

## **It's complicated and we haven't put everything in this article. But it's worth it!**

What's more, there are two parts to Pension Credit: Guarantee Credit and Savings Credit. You may qualify for one but not the other. But, given how much pension credit is currently unclaimed, it's worth at least finding out if you qualify. Before you start, you'll need:

- your National Insurance number
- your bank or building society account details
- details of all your income (earnings, benefits and pensions) and
- any savings and investments you have.

If you're part of a couple, you'll need to have these details for your partner too.

You can check online, using the [free Pension Credit calculator](#) on the Government's website.

Or call the Pension Credit helpline on **0800 731 0469**.

### **Pension Credit myths busted**

#### **I own my home – I can't possibly qualify for Pension Credit**

*Not true. Pension Credit is based on your income. Owning your home doesn't make any difference.*

#### **I'm still working; isn't Pension Credit just for people on pensions?**

*No. It's the total amount of your income that counts for Pension Credit, whether it's earnings from employment, or pension.*

#### **I've heard having savings means you can't claim Pension Credit**

*This isn't true, either. Savings of £10,000 or less don't affect your eligibility for Pension Credit.*

Newcastle City Council Welfare Rights Team are writing to those people they know are eligible for Pension Credit but haven't claimed. If you receive this letter, PLEASE CLAIM: it's your right and you should have it.

Remember if you qualify for Pension Credit you also qualify for Winter Fuel Payment and other entitlements

Here are two organisations that can help with this:

[Pension credit advice | Age UK](#) or Phone 0800 678 1602;



[Pension Credit - Citizens Advice](#) or phone 0800 278 7823.

By claiming Pension Credit, you might become eligible for other benefits too, such as help with health and housing costs.

**You must make your claim before 21 December.**

---

### **Winter fuel payments**

Every time there is an instance of wasted state spending or funding for a vainglorious project, every media outlet in the country will be contrasting this expenditure with the government's penny-pinching actions on winter fuel. Every time MPs' salaries and allowances are highlighted, there will be a reference to the £200-£300 taken from 10 million older people. The Prime Minister has already had a taste of public anger over his excessive freebie bill, aggravated to a considerable extent by the way his government appears to be targeting pensioners to pay for the woes of the economy.



As evidence emerges of the cruel impact of the decision, which was railroaded through Parliament before any impact assessments were published, and without consultation, the government has every reason to rethink its position. Energy prices go up in October, creating increased worries for those just above the pension credit eligibility limit.

Everyone with half a brain knows that to scrap winter energy support for all those with an income in excess of £218 per week will immediately plunge millions into fuel poverty. *Silver Voices* argues that, if there has to be a cut-off point, it should be at the higher rate of tax.

The Chancellor can right these wrongs in her budget on 30 October and we in *Silver Voices* have published a new petition to persuade her to call off her attack on pensioners. We want energy support for all older people on modest incomes; no scrapping of other universal

benefits or the single council tax discount; and steps to improve the basic state pension. You can sign it on this link:

<https://www.change.org/Budget-Must-Protect-Older-People>

**Dennis Reed, Director of *Silver Voices*** Photo: Dennis from Silver Voices website.

Note: A version of this article appeared in the *Express* on 19 September.

---

## **Elders Council Responds to Cuts in Winter Fuel Payments**



At the Elders Council, our members hold a broad range of views, but one thing is clear: it's crucial that older people have enough money to live on and receive all the benefits to which they're entitled. Unfortunately, many older adults are still not claiming the support they are eligible for. With recent cuts to Winter Fuel Payments, we felt it was more important than ever to ensure people have access to accurate information.

To provide the best advice possible, we met with Newcastle City Council's Welfare Rights team to verify our sources of information. We also reached out to the network of organisations working with older people across Newcastle, encouraging them to spread consistent messages about Pension Credit and where to get help with filling in forms.

We've kept our members up to date with the national campaigns on winter fuel payments and were pleased to see our efforts highlighted in an article in the *Chronicle*. You can read the full article here: [Chronicle Article](#). While the Elders Council doesn't provide a direct advice service, you can find local organisations that do on InformationNOW: [Pension Credit Information](#).

**Clare Levi**

---

### **Winter fuel payment campaign details**

The cancellation of the winter fuel payment has caused a lot of controversy. If you are opposed to the cancellation, you can join this AgeUK campaign by signing a petition online:

<https://campaigns.ageuk.org.uk/page/154268/petition/1?ea.trackin&g.id=Website>

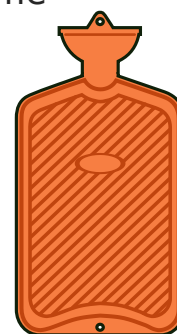
or ask for a paper copy by ringing 0800 678 1602.  
(The petition was still open when the magazine went to print).

---

## **Keeping warm this winter**

**You probably know this already but here's a reminder of some useful tips from readers and the British Red Cross about keeping warm:**

- Layer up your warmest indoor clothing as thin layers trap your body heat
- Wear thermal underwear and wool jumpers and use a hot-water bottle
- Drink plenty of hot drinks throughout the day and move around as often as possible: sitting still for long periods of time will make your body colder
- Keep hands and feet warm by wearing thick socks and slippers when indoors; wear gloves with good insulating material such as wool or leather
- Open curtains during the day (the sun still has warmth) but remember to close them as soon as the sun sets to keep the warm air in
- Use draught excluders to stop cold draughts
- Consider buying an electric blanket if you don't already have one – it is a lot cheaper to run than a heater and lovely to get into bed for.
- In bed, wear fleece or flannel pyjamas with bed-socks to keep your feet cosy



**If readers have any other tips about keeping warm this winter, do let us know.**

---

## **The Internet**

John is a volunteer with the 'Get Online' Newcastle team. He's describing the help you can get to get online. It's becoming increasingly part of our daily lives. Here's John:

"The internet. How did we ever live without it? ("Very well," I hear from the back.)

For good or bad, the internet (or, more precisely, email) and the British invention of the World Wide Web are now part of most people's lives. As always, there's a catch: there isn't a manual. Yes,

you can do banking, photographing, emails, internet browsing, shopping, listen to music, see what your doorbell sees, do text messaging, maybe control the central heating, plan routes. Even maybe make phone calls. But how?



Let me introduce the Get Online Newcastle Team. They have a range of courses delivered at the City Library. There are general beginners' courses,

courses dedicated to email, and courses on "Office" (Word, Excel, PowerPoint). There's also the weekly challenge of the "Techy Tea Party", where people bring in a phone or laptop or other device and seek assistance.

The target is to support on a one-to-one basis, which is why the team are always on the lookout for volunteers to train up. There's a constant need for volunteers with patience, and the ability to listen. Technical knowledge is a bonus, but there's always someone to hand who can help out if needed. If you want to know more about the support available, or how to enquire about becoming a volunteer, as I have been for four years, please search "Get Online Newcastle" on the City Council website. If you're not online, just call 0191 277 8842."

**John Birkett** Volunteer with Get Online Newcastle

Image: from their website

---

## **Bipolar disorder**

Bipolar disorder is a mental health difficulty that affects your mood. People who experience bipolar may have times where their mood is extremely high (mania) and times where they feel really low (depression). Everyone who has bipolar will experience it in different ways, but the condition can greatly impact a person's functioning, sleep and lifestyle. Bipolar disorder affects around 1 in 100 people in the UK and there is a growing population of older people who have bipolar. Despite this, there is very little research at the moment which looks into how people experience bipolar later in life and how mental health services can best support them.

Post graduate students at Manchester University carried out a research project in the hopes of developing a questionnaire for older adults with bipolar to measure their current level of personal

recovery. Personal recovery is the extent to which a person is living a meaningful life and engaging with things they enjoy, alongside symptoms of bipolar. Our hopes were to develop a measure to support therapists in services and to promote future research into the needs of this population. To do this, we worked with older adults with bipolar to develop the questionnaire and asked 55 older adults with bipolar to complete it. This allowed us to check whether the measure was accurate at measuring personal recovery in bipolar and if it could be used over time.

Due to the support of older adults, we were able to develop an accurate and reliable questionnaire. It is the first questionnaire of personal recovery designed with and for older adults with bipolar. This tool can help mental health clinicians and researchers focus on personal recovery and better support older adults with bipolar.

**Jen Matthewson** post graduate research student Manchester University

Note from the editor: some of our members took part in this research. It's another example of the impact the EC and its members have. See the front page for a great example.

---

## **Dental services in England**

Dental treatment is **FREE** if you are in an NHS hospital and your treatment is carried out by the hospital dentist.

It is **FREE** if you are an NHS Dental Service outpatient (but you may have to pay for dentures and bridges)

You also do not have to pay if, when the treatment starts, you are a claimant of Income Support; Income-related Employment and Support Allowance; Pension Credit

Please check as you will be asked to show your dentist written proof that you do not have to pay. Medical conditions do not exempt you from payment for dental treatment.

## **Treatment under the NHS**

You can have all the treatment provided under the NHS that your dentist feels is clinically necessary in order to keep your mouth, teeth and gums healthy.





**NHS dental charges** You pay **only one charge** for each complete course of treatment, even if you need to visit the dentist more than once to complete the treatment.

**Band 1 course of treatment is £26.80.** This covers an examination, diagnosis (e.g., x-rays), advice on how to prevent problems, and a scale and polish if needed.

**Band 2 course of treatment is £73.50.** This covers everything in Band 1 plus any further treatment such as fillings or root canal work or removing a tooth.

**Band 3 course of treatment is £319.10.** This covers everything in Bands 1 and 2 plus crowns, dentures and bridges.

To get NHS treatment, contact a practice providing NHS dentistry and ask for an NHS appointment.

If you are having difficulty finding an NHS dentist, you can call NHS England on 0300 311 2233 or visit the NHS website [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) (The information provided is from the Department of Health & Social Care.)

---

## Green Heart

In September, Helen was a guest on *Older Voices*, the weekly Elders Council radio programme. After the show, we asked her to write about what she had told our radio audience – and here is the result:



The climate is changing. That much is clear. Extreme weather events are wreaking havoc across the globe. But what can we do in our small corner of the world to bring about meaningful change?

For me, my response to my personal climate anxiety has been to create Green Heart, a collective that strives to reduce textile waste by encouraging customers to buy second hand rather than new. Lying awake at night terrified for the future for my grandchildren and distressed about the suffering already being experienced in the Global South was making me severely depressed. My hope has come from taking action in opening the Green Heart shop on Gateshead High Street and making a difference every day

Green Heart sells preloved clothes and accessories, second-hand books and yoga equipment, household refills and vegan snacks. The collective is always looking for opportunities to reuse, recycle and upcycle whatever comes their way. For me, this is a key part of living in a more sustainable way on planet Earth: I'm vegan; I don't

To find out more about Green Heart and how you can get involved, visit [greenheartcollective.uk](https://greenheartcollective.uk). And, if you want to listen to her chat with Maysie, please go to [mixcloud.com/LLARC](https://mixcloud.com/LLARC) and open *Older Voices 298*.

We have had articles from members about how they `tread lightly on the earth. See page 17 of issue 104 Jools Vintage clothes or page 7 of issue 105 Barbara recycling. Editor

The sculptural piece will be formed in steel and will create a visual narrative describing the history of Newcastle and is inspired by *The Chorographia* by William Gray, 1649. This book was later republished by Andrew Reid in 1884 and illustrated by Newcastle artist, Joseph Crawhall, whose humorous artwork often parodied and honoured the culture of his home city. Differentia are in the



middle of the engagement phase of this project, which has involved a series of workshops with various groups including urban sketchers, artists, the city guides of Newcastle and a number of groups involved with the Tyne and Wear Museums and Archives (TWAM) and hosted by them in the Discovery Museum.

One of the most important legacy projects has been to form the Figures of Tyne Art Group, who meet weekly. This group have been instrumental in the development of the storylines and through their creation of “chapbooks”, which were cheap, anonymous publications and read by lower-class people who could not afford books.

The artists have created their own artistic form based on this tradition and made them into personal observations of the historic architecture of Newcastle, allowing for a re-telling of the history of many well-known buildings that have untold stories. We can then take these stories and themes and weave them into the artwork.

In a way, the artwork is a visual prompt for people to investigate Newcastle’s history. Ultimately, we hope that people passing the artwork will be inspired to find out more by visiting these buildings and learning about the stories behind the buildings themselves.

### **Stephen Pardue Differentia**

Photo: is part of a concept map provided by Differentia

#### **Farewell to Tim**

We bid a fond farewell to our Development Worker, Tim Oxley who has moved on to new opportunities. Unfortunately, due to challenges in securing additional funding for the post, Tim has had to seek work elsewhere.

We are grateful for his contribution in connecting with older people across the city and supporting the work of the Elders Council.

**Thank you Tim!**

### **To retire or not to retire, that’s the question**

Some of you are already retired and others find it’s on the horizon. Gill, one of our staff members, is now considering her options and

writes about it here. What advice you would give Gill as she ponders over this big decision? Why not write in and let Gill and us know? We may publish some of your answers (Editor).

### **Retirement musings**

As I approach state pension age, I'm torn between envisioning a world cruise and wondering if my knees can handle bungee jumping. Yet, amid the excitement, there are some key reflections to consider:

#### **Pros:**

**Freedom & Leisure:** No more alarm clocks or rush-hour traffic. It's time to perfect that nap in my recliner and indulge in hobbies like golf or binge-watching Netflix. Retirement offers the luxury of time.

**Discounts & Perks:** From free NHS eye tests and discount vouchers to senior meal deals, there's a treasure trove of benefits.

Budgeting suddenly becomes less daunting with discounts on everything from haircuts to travel.

**Wisdom & Experience:** With age comes wisdom, and retirement grants me the chance to share my stories and pursue new interests, like drumming lessons. I aim to play drums on a Sam Fender backing track.



#### **Cons:**

**Financial Planning:** Saying goodbye to a regular income means careful budgeting and adjusting spending habits.

**Social Isolation:** The transition from office camaraderie to a quieter life can be challenging. Volunteering and staying active in groups like the Elders Council will be crucial.

**Health Challenges:** As health concerns loom, managing appointments and self-care become priorities. But, with the right support, I'm ready to tackle these hurdles head-on.

**In conclusion:** Retirement offers a mix of opportunities and challenges. I'll navigate this new chapter with enthusiasm, embracing leisure while staying mindful of financial realities and social connections. With my concessionary travel pass in hand, the adventure continues.

**Gill Spoor**

# Ways to Donate

**Every penny counts! No matter how small, the Elders Council really values your donation.**

Your donation will help us provide information to our members by printing and posting this magazine.

Each magazine costs about **£2.62** to print and post.

## **Direct payment**

Bank: Co-operative Bank Account name: Elders Council of Newcastle

Sort Code: 08-92-99      Account Number: 65079623

**PayPal** A quick and easy way to donate via our website  
<https://www.elderscouncil.org.uk/donate>

**Cheque** Post a cheque payable to the "The Elders Council of Newcastle" to the address on the back of this magazine.

**Cash** We also accept cash donations. Please ring the office to arrange collection.

[www.giveasyoulive.com](http://www.giveasyoulive.com) Log on to 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

**Legacy** 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.

## **Gift Aid**

Let us know if you are a UK taxpayer and we'll send a Gift Aid form that you can sign and return to us. This allows us to claim gift aid from the government (there is no charge to you). You can also download the form from the donate page of our website.



# Magazine Information

## Magazine articles

Do you have a great article or an idea for one or an axe you want to grind for the next magazine? Then please send it to us by **Friday 14 December 2024**, at [info@elderscouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@elderscouncil.org.uk). You may also post articles to us at the address below. Articles that are typed or word-processed are really appreciated but hand-written articles are fine. **Please note the editor reserves the right to alter, adapt or change articles submitted to the magazine.**

## Contact details

The Elders Council of Newcastle  
2nd Floor  
Biomedical Research Building  
Campus for Ageing and Vitality  
Nuns Moor Road  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE4 5PL

Phone: 0191 208 2701

Email: [info@elderscouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@elderscouncil.org.uk)

Website: [www.elderscouncil.org.uk](http://www.elderscouncil.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. 1122424

## Magazine in other formats

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

**Reminder** If you move, change your email address or telephone number, please let us know so that we can keep our records up to date.

**Photographs and images** Photographs and images are provided by Nick Lambert, the Elders Council and from Creative Commons unless otherwise credited.