



The Echo

The Magazine of the Elders Council

Issue 109

May to July 2025

Elders Council of Newcastle Annual General Meeting

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I am delighted to invite members to the 2024-25 AGM, where we will celebrate another year of working with and involving older people in Newcastle.

Wednesday 23rd July, from 2pm to 4pm
The Greenhouse, One Strawberry Lane Newcastle NE1

The formal business will be at the beginning of the session, presenting the annual report and accounts, then electing trustees. There are no retiring trustees in 2025; however, there are vacancies on the Board. There will also be a vacancy for Chair following my retirement from this position at the AGM; this appointment will be made by the trustees.

If you are interested in applying to be a trustee, please contact our office for more details.

At the AGM there is an opportunity to meet existing and new members, to reflect on work carried out over the year and to offer information about interesting voluntary work and learning available within our charity and the city.

Please complete the enclosed reply and proxy vote slips (if you are unable to attend, then advise how you would like to cast your vote) and return to the office address. Alternatively, you can email info@elderscouncil.org.uk or phone 0191 208 2701.

I hope you will reply as soon as possible, but no later than 5th July. Please advise if you require additional support on the day.

I look forward to seeing you on 23rd July, 2025.



Say hello to Victoria, page 8

Big birthdays on page 9

Research and Impact Group

by Diane Scott, Michael Farrington and Meg Hardiman.

We, the Research and Impact group, are an enthusiastic group of Elders Council (EC) members who collaborate with researchers on projects that impact older adults. The Research and Impact Group (affectionately known as the RIG) gives our members the opportunity to involve themselves in activating positive change

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through research for the older adults of Newcastle. We spend time evaluating the impact of the work we have carried out with researchers and we continue to monitor our professional relationships with the partners we work with. Some of our recent partnerships include: nutritionists across Newcastle and Northumbria University, the Healthy Ageing Policy Research Unit, and we have received funding to carry out our own internal consultations where we are reviewing the impact that the EC has on its members.

We meet on a monthly basis, and we often invite a guest to attend to update us on the research they are doing and how the Elders Council could get involved.



We are a forward-thinking group with big ideas and we work to challenge and improve the quality of life for older adults. We also sit on representative steering groups and committees, such as a Digital Inclusion steering group.

An example of a strong collaboration is our work on the nutrition project led by Dr Adrian Holliday and Adriana Di Bernado.

We have a longstanding relationship with Adrian and Adriana, where we offered our expertise as older adults from a range of diverse professional backgrounds in supporting the work they are now doing by discussions held at the RIG. We were also invited to a nutrition event aimed at explaining the benefits of the Mediterranean diet, where we were then treated to a healthy lunch!

Meg Hardiman, our Projects Coordinator, is partially funded by financial remuneration we have received from researchers. This has provided essential staff support to the RIG, where Meg coordinates the organisation of the agenda, maintains connections with researchers, and opens a conversation with other local organisations.



We are keen to welcome Elders Council members who are interested in working on innovative research projects with the hope of generating a positive impact for all older adults.

Raise a glass to our retiring chair

By Barbara Douglas and Clare Levi

Let's raise a glass to Anne Raffle, Chair of the Elders Council of Newcastle for six years! Anne has proven herself to be an excellent chair, successfully steering the organisation through calm waters as well as turbulent times. Her calm and measured leadership style has enabled the organisation to form strong partnerships, cementing its

reputation locally and nationally as a beacon for older people's contribution and their right to be heard.

At the start of her journey, Anne immediately set about equipping



herself for the role by joining the Association of Chairs and attending briefing sessions. Since then, she has continued to network with charity leaders and, as a firm believer in lifelong learning, has always embraced opportunities to learn and increase her skill set for the role.

COVID was a critical moment for the Elders Council. Ageism was rife and older people were made to feel vulnerable and disposable. Conscious that many of the Elders Council members would be both isolating and isolated, Anne co-ordinated a small team who set about making personal telephone calls to members. Those phone calls provided vital reassurance to members and often signposted them to essential help. Always interested in learning and not being left behind, Anne quickly embraced the opportunities which technology offers to stay in touch via Zoom and Teams.

Only one Board meeting was cancelled. Anne helped to skill up her fellow Board members to stay engaged via on-line meetings and the organisation continued to do excellent work. As an example, the Elders Council held a series of webinars as part of the "Doorbells" housing project, which attracted both local and national audiences.

In her role as Chair, Anne has not only demonstrated what it takes to lead an organisation but has also rolled up her sleeves to undertake some of the practical work. Together with Mary Nicholls, she produces a fortnightly e-bulletin packed full of useful information for members. She gives talks about the organisation and attends a wide range of public events representing the organisation at local and national level. She gave the opening address at the British Society of Gerontology conference in Newcastle in 2024. She also participates in research projects which further our understanding of ageing and how we can improve the

quality of life of older people. And she actively supports the Later Life Audio and Radio Co-operative, which grew out of the Elders Council's community radio programme. Anne works hard to keep older people connected within her own community and beyond, visiting groups and being a shining example for the work of the Elders Council.

Anne spent a significant amount of her working life with the North East Ambulance Service. This experience of public service, coupled with Anne's strong values and belief in social justice, drive her to carry out whatever she undertakes to the very best of her ability. Anne's generosity, warmth, commitment and genuine interest in improving the quality of life of others means she always goes above and beyond, no matter what the personal cost. It is for this reason that her colleagues nominated her as an inspirational woman for International Women's Day 2025.

As Anne reaches the end of her term of office as Chair of Elders Council, it is fitting that her considerable achievements in improving the quality of life of older people in Newcastle and beyond are celebrated. **Thank you, Anne!**

Marmot City

by Barbara Douglas

Representatives from the Elders Council attended a conference hosted by Newcastle City Council's Public Health department to launch the city's



ambition to become a Marmot City. What is a Marmot City? It's a designation that commits the city to addressing health disparities through the ["Marmot Eight" principles](#) developed by Sir Michael Marmot from the [Institute of Health Equity](#). The principles address the underlying conditions, such as education, housing, jobs, which make the difference to people's health, quality of life and life expectancy.

Newcastle City Council will have support from the Institute of Health Equity for two years towards becoming a Marmot City. It was not clear at the conference what form this support would take but it is likely to be help with securing the buy-in of key partners and sharing the learning from other Marmot places. Initially, Newcastle has identified mental health, children and young people, racism and gender and drugs and alcohol as its priorities.

Michael Marmot delivered the keynote speech, which left the audience in no doubt that healthy life expectancy has declined since 2010 with people from our most disadvantaged communities living 18 years of their shorter lives in ill health.

The position in Newcastle is significantly worse than the national average: the average man and woman in Newcastle stops living in good health more than five years before they reach state pension age. Michael Marmot clearly illustrated the impact of austerity on driving this trend and the serious consequences for the people of our city.

One of the key principles of a Marmot City is giving children the best start in life, and primary school children participated in the event with feisty performances.

A question was asked about the place of older people in a Marmot City, and Sir Michael acknowledged that a Marmot city takes a life



course approach and older people must be a part of it.

Nonetheless, we left feeling that we need to work hard to demonstrate the social and economic benefits that older people contribute and that our work on making Newcastle an age-friendly city has much to offer. We all count.

Other presentations included:

- examples of engaging people from ethnically minoritised communities in research on how to raise awareness and accessibility of cancer screening programmes

- two powerful presentations on Inclusive Cities and Revival Newcastle (drug and alcohol recovery)

A key message from David Best from Inclusive Cities was the importance of getting the right conditions for recovery: somewhere to live; someone to love; and something to do. These principles apply to us all.

Newcastle Age Friendly City Group

by Keith Williamson

At a recent meeting of the Newcastle Age Friendly City Group, hosted by the Elders Council, discussions focused on health inequalities and the concept of a "Marmot City". You can read about this concept and the recent conference elsewhere in *The Echo* (p5) but do you know about Newcastle being an Age Friendly city? Newcastle, actively supported by the Elders Council, signed up many years ago to following the World Health Organisation's Age Friendly Communities framework. This means working on the areas of the built and social environment that can help addresses barriers to ageing well in a city. In Newcastle, the Age Friendly group is made up of people from a number of organisations, all of which represent the interests of older people.

So, you might think that this group would have something to contribute to Newcastle becoming a Marmot City. However, there was scant mention of older residents at the Marmot conference when the leader of the City Council, Cllr Kilgour spoke.



No time-scale was mentioned. Nor has the council got a Cabinet Councillor with Older People in their portfolio. So, it would seem that there is still work to be done to ensure that older residents are recognised as part of the equation. If the City is to use "evidence and local knowledge", as mentioned by Prof. Marmot, where better to start than with its older residents? That this is essential is borne

out by the fact that, in Newcastle, life expectancy and healthy life expectancy are below the national average, with the average age that women and men stop living in good health more than five years before the state pensionable age.

My conclusions from our discussions (and these are personal views) are that the Age Friendly Group should use its influence to:

1. exert pressure on politicians – local and national – to fully recognise the place of older people;
2. ensure that the city commits itself to a (realistic) timescale; and
3. lobby Central and Regional Government, through contact with MPs and the NE Combined Authority Elected Mayor, to play their part.

New beginnings with the Elders Council of Newcastle

by Victoria Morley

I am excited to introduce myself as the new Executive Officer for the Elders Council of Newcastle. It's an honour to take on this role, and I look forward to collaborating with the board, members, and the wider community to support and advocate for older people in our city.

Before joining the Elders Council, I worked at Newcastle University as an Executive Assistant to the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Engagement and Place, and the Governance Office. This role gave me a deep understanding of how the city functions, how decisions are made, and how key organisations like Newcastle City Council and the North East Combined Authority influence our communities. Additionally, I have spent several years working in the community, delivering wellbeing projects, and supporting education in schools and colleges. This experience connected me with people from all walks of life, working towards practical solutions to enhance community wellbeing.

I am an "ideas person" and an action taker. I believe in listening to people, understanding their concerns, and translating ideas into



meaningful solutions. This approach is what excites me about working with the Elders Council – a group rich with wisdom and experience. Together, we won't just talk about the challenges facing older people; we'll work to create opportunities and make real improvements.

My passion for learning and development led me to enrol on a BA (Hons) degree in Design and Innovation with Advanced Creative Writing at the Open University. For me, learning is not just about earning qualifications, but about growing, expanding perspectives, and finding new ways to improve the world around us.

When I'm not working, I enjoy reading and writing. I write poetry, fantasy fiction, and resources about wellbeing coaching, lifestyle design, personal development and business. As a performance poet and spoken word artist, I've had the chance to share my creative work with audiences. I am a mother of three, which reminds me daily of the importance of community and the vital support networks that are crucial for people of all ages.

I am thrilled to begin this new chapter with the Elders Council. Together, we will listen, collaborate, and take steps to ensure that Newcastle is a vibrant and supportive place for older people.

I look forward to meeting and working with you on this exciting journey as we connect, activate and influence across the city.

Active at ninety

by Steve Whitley and Anne Raffle

At the Elders Council we wanted to make it clear to our younger readers that later life can be an active life. So, we've asked three of our older members to tell us how they spend their time in 2025, the year of their ninetieth birthday.



Our first example, Steve Whitley – ninety in June.

He's a member of the Editorial Group which oversees the publication of the Elders Council magazine, *The Echo*, and is one

of the three editors of the Later Life Audio and Radio Cooperative's Newsletter, *Generations on Air*.

He's also a member of Newcastle Hospital Trust's Patient Information Review Panel, which vets all the patient leaflets which the Trust publishes. But his main job for the Elders Council is to produce *Older Voices*, the Elders Council's weekly one-hour radio magazine programme. The mantra of the radio group is "You can teach an old dog new tricks." He tends the little patch of earth at the front of his terrace house (the patch which estate agents call "town garden") and is attempting to green his back lane.

Second is Tony Huzzard, who's ninety in August.

He believes in living life to the full, telling us, "Well, I've got only one life, haven't I?" So, he gave us a list of the activities that he undertakes in a typical week:

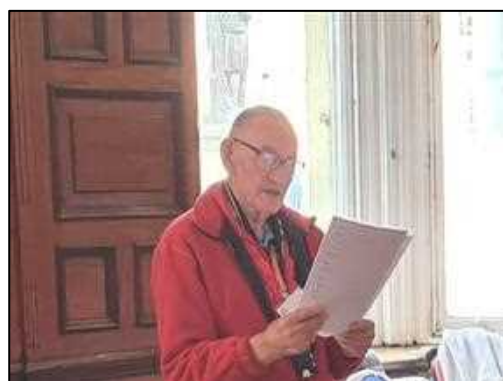
Daily Monday to Saturday: Breakfast Club

Once a week (on different days): Company of Others Dance group: Gosforth Community Choir: Bede Chorus: Gosforth & District Choir: Newbiggin Hall Singers: Taize group:

Summer months scoring for Newcastle City Cricket Club.

Sunday: Volunteering at St Mary's Church Fawdon (e.g., reading the lesson, singing, handing out hymn books and refreshments).

Every October, Tony sings with the Proms choir at the City Hall. Every month, he goes on Zoom to join a Chesterfield tinnitus poetry group. Every other week, he sings solo a capella on the Elders Council radio programme, *Older Voices*. He also joins Elders Council events to share his support. On top of all that, he's an avid gardener.



Our third ninety-year-old to tell you about is William Lynn, who will be 90 in September.

William has been a widower for quite a few years now and proud of the fact that he is still able to look after himself without



domestic support. He does have a gardener to keep everything outside in order.

He plays carpet bowls once a week, takes daily walks to the shops for fresh air, exercise and groceries. He uses public transport to get around to visit exhibitions and events whenever possible. He enjoys the Brunswick group

on a Tuesday listening to interesting topics.

He is on the committee of the North East Council Civil Service Union and enjoys catching up with former colleagues. He also takes part in various Elders Council and Search events and last year found some useful information and tips in the Nutrition project. At home he watches Prime Minister's Questions, the Daily Politics show and radio to keep up to date. He receives the weekend newspapers and enjoys puzzles and crosswords.

Thank you to our three members for sharing.

Activities don't have to stop just because you're getting older, so why not write in and tell our readers what it is that you do to keep busy and involved?

Afternoon Tea with the Lord Mayor.

by Liz Gregson

On 8 April we had afternoon tea with the Lord Mayor, Rob Higgins. He invited us, members of the Elders Council, when we met at 'The



House of Evergreen Arts' exhibition in March.

The Lord Mayor introduced himself and welcomed us. While we had tea, coffee and delicious cakes, we talked about how we became involved with the Elders Council and our respective roles. These included being a trustee, administrator, co-ordinating the

newsletters and magazines and being part of the team recording the *Older Voices* weekly radio show. We discussed how the Elders Council works to raise awareness of the needs and interests of older people and ways to make Newcastle an age-friendly city.

Rob Higgins holds the office of Lord Mayor for a year, while also working as a councillor for Benwell and Scotswood. He explained his mayoral role and varied responsibilities, including chairing Council meetings, attending official events in his capacity as Lord Mayor and reaching out to community groups, including Search, and schools. He recognises the importance of meeting people and recognising their achievements.

The Lord Mayor then gave us a guided tour of the Silver Gallery, including silverware and mementos from official visits over the years, which gave a fascinating historical perspective. It was an enjoyable, interesting afternoon sharing our experiences and views, and acknowledging the importance of working together.

Thank you, Lord Mayor.

Photo: Steve Brock <http://www.stevebrockphotography.co.uk/>

Food and Drink

We gathered, we shared, and we listened

by Adriana Di Bernardo

Now it's time to act.

Last year, researchers from Newcastle University hosted a nutrition information-sharing event. A sociable atmosphere, enjoyed by a diverse group of Elders Council and local community members, fuelled compelling question-time and round-table discussions. Following the success of the event, we studied these anecdotes to better understand attendees' nutrition-related barriers, interests, and priorities. Whilst some older adults shared their kitchen expertise, others shared how planning meals, preparing food, and maintaining appetite can be somewhat of an up-hill battle.

We observed broad diversity in kitchen know-how, which influenced capacity and motivation to cook. This motivation was also influenced by things like loneliness, or whether eating was seen as a social event. Some people spoke of restricting eating due to feeling guilty for wasting food that was left uneaten, or because they wanted to avoid gaining weight. Preventing frailty was important to many attendees due to the ripple effect of the impact it can have on confidence and wellbeing.



What was clear is that there is an appetite for accessible, practical and personalised nutrition and diet information. To meet this need, we are planning some exciting nutrition-related events for this summer. We believe cooking skills sessions for topping up kitchen know-how could be a fun and exciting way of improving diet.

We also think a recipe-swap event could be a great way to discover new culinary options and meet new people from across the city. We hope that sharing meal ideas could even lead to the sharing of meals, particularly amongst those who are often cooking for one and seeking ways to eat with new friends. To contact us or find out more about upcoming events, please feel free to reach out to us via the Elders Council.

Fire-pit cooking in the South Pacific: a tradition of flavour and community

by Gillian Spoor

One of my fondest memories whilst in the travel industry were my visits to the South Pacific and going along to a traditional evening of music, dance and banquet cooked underground.

Fire-pit cooking is more than just a culinary method; it's a cultural

tradition that brings communities together, steeped in centuries of island heritage. Known locally by names like umu in Samoa, hangi in New Zealand, and lovo in Fiji, these earth ovens produce meals that are as full of flavour as they are symbolic of togetherness. The process begins with heating stones in a fire pit until they are red-hot. These stones are then carefully arranged to create the perfect cooking environment. Food, often wrapped in banana or taro



leaves, sometimes beautifully plaited, is layered inside the pit, with root vegetables, fish, chicken, or pork taking centre stage. The natural wrapping not only locks in moisture but also infuses the food with a subtle, earthy, aroma.

Once the ingredients are in place, the pit is covered with leaves, mats, or soil to trap heat and create a slow-cooking environment. The result is a feast of delicious tender, smoky flavours.

But fire-pit cooking is more than just about taste; it's an event that embodies connection in communities and family ties. Families and friends gather around the fire, sharing stories and laughter while preparing the meal. The ritual reflects the South Pacific's deep respect for nature and community, embodying a lifestyle centred on harmony and shared experiences.

In today's fast-paced world, fire-pit cooking offers a reminder of the joys of a simple meal lovingly prepared, cooked and shared with friends and family, keeping a tradition alive for future generations.

A different kind of meal

by Steve Whitley

I served my national service in the Royal Navy and I spent most of it learning Russian. When my Russian course finished in 1955, I was deployed as an interpreter on HMS Chieftain, a Home Fleet destroyer visiting Leningrad.

As part of the Soviet Baltic Fleet's hospitality, the British officers (me included) were invited to the Russian Officers' Mess for lunch. When we entered the dining-room, there in front of us was one very long table laid out formally with lots of silver and many glasses; but there were no chairs. I don't know why that was, because Russians don't normally eat a formal lunch standing up, so I can only conclude that somebody had been to a British cocktail party and assumed that it was in fact the British who did this.

When the meal was over (and it was a very good one: cabbage soup and dumplings followed by roast pork; Russian champagne and both white and red wine), the toasts began. First, of course, came the formal ones – the Queen, President Bulganin; Sir Anthony Eden and Nikita Khrushchov, the prime ministers; the British admiral, the Soviet admiral. Then the Soviet officer next to me toasted my parents and I responded; he asked, "Do you have a brother?", "Yes", "To your brother!"; "A sister?", "Yes", "To your sister!"; "A wife?", "No", "To your future wife!" and so on and so on.



The toasts were, of course, drunk in vodka, and the Russian custom is that each toast must be drunk "Do dna" – bottoms up. What I noticed was that, after each toast, the Russians ate a bit of bread and had a drink of sparkling water. So, I did the same. But many British officers did not; and many British officers taught me that day the meaning of the phrase "to drink under the table", much to the Russians' delight. So maybe that was why they provided no chairs.

Remembering a Russian birthday party

by Gillian Spoor

Many years ago, during a time living in Leningrad, Russia, we were celebrating a friend's son's 18th birthday. This was a time of shortages, especially of things like sugar and the dilemma was to try and produce a home-made birthday cake.

We lived in a large block of flats and neighbours rallied around to contribute what they could, but sugar and jam weren't readily available.

On the day, we all turned up with our gifts, bottles of vodka, cognac and Russian champagne (you could buy a ticket for the Kirov ballet, a bottle of Russian champagne and a tin of caviar for \$10 at the time!). But we were all excited to see how the cake had turned out.



There in the middle of the table was a beautiful looking honey cake (medovik), layers of sponge and butter cream with decoration in red, presumably coloured icing. But the hostess just giggled when we asked how she had managed that!

There were lots of "ahs" and "oohs" as we tucked into the spread making the table groan, as is usual with Russian hospitality. After a few drinks, each round accompanied by a traditional Russian toast, the table and the carpet were pushed back and the dancing began. Eventually, as people tired, a guitar was brought out and more soulful ballads were sung.

Now it was time for the cake! Imagine everyone's surprise when, after the first bite, we discovered the cake was savoury! The layers were pancakes spread with liver pate and the "butter cream" was mayonnaise. The red decoration turned out to be ketchup!

I can't say it was a cake I would try making at home myself but I admired the inventiveness caused by necessity. My friend's son was absolutely awestruck by his mum's determination to make his birthday special.

The Spice of Life

by Sue Tideswell

Not necessarily of life, but certainly very tasty! As anyone who has been to the Buxton festival will know, it isn't all music, literature and art: there are bars, restaurants and there are also many stalls selling interesting things, and Buxton is a lovely town

Last summer, one of the stalls caught my eye. It was selling a variety of packets of ready-mixed spices, complete with recipes, and I can vouch for the tastiness of those that I have tried. Each packet costs £23.50 and they are made by a small local firm called Saucy Spice UK. Why not give them a try!

Mary Nicholls writes: I cleared my spices collection recently and found I had 25 jars! Some were duplicates and others the same



spice but the whole spice or the ground version. A number were out of date; the oldest was 2012. I do use spices when cooking but perhaps I should go for smaller quantities as Sue suggests with a recipe attached. It may also help those of us whose palette needs a bit more “zing”.

An act of kindness

by Anne Richarson

On my way to work, I often stop by the supermarket to grab my essentials, especially on Mondays, when I pick up my lunch for the week. I'm a creature of habit and always buy the same things — yogurts, apples, and grapes. Occasionally, I'll slip a bottle of wine into my basket, just in case I need a little pick-me-up after a tough day at the office. The staff there are always so friendly, too. They have a lot on their plates but still manage to greet me with a smile and a few words. They know me as a regular customer and always make me feel welcome.

One Monday, I followed my usual routine — visiting the same aisles for the same items. I went to the self-service checkout after gathering everything, including the bottle of wine. However, to my embarrassment, I realised I had forgotten my purse. I had to go back through the store, putting everything back on to the shelves. As I was doing this, the security guard, who I always say hello to, asked what I was doing. I explained that I had left my purse at home. He then told me to gather all the items again, and he would use his own debit card to pay for them. I thanked him, but politely

When I reached the self-checkout, he reminded me that the wine was still missing and told me to grab it. We both had a giggle! I told him I'd come back the next day to pay him back, but he said not to worry and to settle up next time I was in. I left the store that day feeling uplifted, knowing that human kindness still exists. I

couldn't wait to share the story with my work colleagues and family, and I still tell it to this day.

The next day, I returned to repay my debt, taking a thank-you card and a cake to share with the staff. Sadly, my office has since

relocated but I still occasionally pop into the store on weekends to pick up some supplies and to say hello.

Council Tax costs are up. What help is out there?

Newcastle City Council has increased council tax by 4.99% in April 2025, but there is support available to help those who are eligible to manage their rising council tax bills.

The discounts you can claim are largely based on the people you live with. For example, if you're the only adult in your home, you'll receive a 25% discount.



Some people who live in your property with you could be classed as “disregarded” – people exempt from paying council tax. This includes under-18s and full-time students.



If someone has moved out of your property, tell the council; any discount will be valid from the date the person moved out.

You may also be eligible for a reduction if you’re on a low income or receiving benefits. Your local council will ask you details about your income and your circumstances, so they can work out if you’re entitled to a council tax reduction.

You could also be entitled to additional support if you’ve reached State Pension age, which you can check on the government website GOV.UK. If you have reached state pension age but don’t meet the reduction criteria, “discretionary reductions” mean that local councils can still reduce or cancel your bill if you can show you’re suffering severe hardship; this is available even if your immigration status doesn’t let you claim public funds.

The rules about calculating your income for council tax reductions are complicated so, if you would like further advice on your eligibility or possible entitlements, please contact your local council or Citizens Advice Newcastle by calling 0808 278 7823 or visiting us between 10am and 12 noon, Monday-Friday, on the 4th Floor of the City Library, NE1 8AX.

2025 Jesmond Community Festival

From Jesmond Community Festival 2025.

This year there will be no less than 75 events, three competitions and an art exhibition, with the events taking place from Saturday 3 May to Sunday 1 June.

Please check for any late changes to the programme, on all festival events on the website www.jesmondcommunityfestival.co.uk .

There are printed programmes in Jesmond Library.

Readers of the Elders Council *Echo* magazine may be particularly interested in the special meeting of Jesmond's "Wellbeing for Life" group on **Wednesday 7 May**, with the topic "Out and About", starting at 10:30am in Jesmond Library.

There are also several guided walks, talks and concerts. On 11 May you can "Try Croquet", free, in Exhibition Park; there is a "Pop Up Clothes Swap" in Jesmond Methodist Church on 17 May, a daytime concert by the Tyneside Mandolin Orchestra in St Hilda's Church on 19 May, St George's Summer Fete on 31 May, and a free, late morning performance by the small orchestra Semitones in Jesmond Library on 1 June.



If you have grandchildren to entertain in half-term week you may like the Kids' Organ Prom in St George's on 28 May, or the ever-popular Teddy Bear Trail.

Many events are free, and many are within easy reach of the Metro or buses along Osborne Road.

Society of the 52 Friends

by Barbara Douglas

When visiting the beautiful exhibition of work by Nerys Johnson at the Laing Art Gallery, I was particularly taken by the accompanying caption. Nerys Johnson had rheumatoid



arthritis most of her life and needed facilitators to give her practical help.

After her access to community care was cut in 1994, Nerys Johnson organised the "Society of the 52 Friends", arranging for one friend to volunteer with her each week of the year. It just reminded me of the importance of good friendships in later life.

Offline and Overlooked

From Age UK

Everyone should have fair and equal access to services. Age UK is campaigning to make sure everyone can access the services they need so that being offline doesn't mean being overlooked.

Public services are rapidly going digital. If, like 2.3 million older people in the UK, you aren't an internet user, it's becoming harder – and in some cases impossible – to access day-to-day necessities such as banking, making NHS appointments or even just paying for car parking.

But it's not just those who aren't online. Plenty of people would just prefer to handle their finances, their bills or their health matters in person or over the phone. No one should feel forced to perform important tasks online if they don't feel comfortable.



Older people who aren't or choose not to be online are being locked out of essential services. **It's discrimination – plain and simple.** And it poses real risks to people's health, wellbeing, finances and ability to participate fully in our society.

It's time to make access to public services fair, for everyone.
You can sign the petition by clicking the link below

Or you can download a paper copy.

Or write to **Freepost Age UK campaigns** (no stamp required).

[https://campaigns.ageuk.org.uk/page/135031/petition/1?ea.trackin
g.id=Website](https://campaigns.ageuk.org.uk/page/135031/petition/1?ea.trackin&id=Website)

Avoiding telephone scams

If you receive one of those dreaded scam phone calls, when the person asks you if you are the homeowner, just reply, "No, I'm sorry. they're out. I'm the cleaner." They soon ring off!

Newcastle Elders Council salutes the service and sacrifice of family and friends during the Second World War - Tyneside did their bit!

by John White

Victory in Europe Day, Tuesday 8 May 1945, celebrated Germany's unconditional surrender of its armed forces. This year is the 80th anniversary.

Churchill's speech, 8 May, 1945: a summary



Winston Churchill took to the airwaves to announce the surrender saying:

"My dear friends, this is your hour. This is not victory of a party or class; it is a victory of the Great British Nation as a whole. We are the first in these ancient islands to draw the sword against tyranny. God bless you all."

Celebrations occurred all over the country. Newcastle and Tyneside enjoyed the street parties that followed, with tremendous spirit and jubilation. Many of *The Echo* readers will either remember the events first hand or had the stories passed down to them by their families.

In 2021 St. James Heritage & Environment group published a booklet *West End at war: stories from the home front* with fascinating interviews with older people about their experiences during the Second World War.

Every adult was expected to contribute. Women found themselves in new and unexpected roles. The lives of children changed dramatically. (*Editor says, "Many of you may remember your own evacuation and we'd like to hear them. Why not write a short piece about that"?*)

They recall the Land Army, arduous shifts in munitions factories, voluntary work on top of the day job and the many children who were evacuated. You can read the booklet yourselves as it can be found in local libraries.

If you are interested in history of the West End and want to read more or join the group here's their website.

<https://stjamesheritage.com/>

Ways to Donate

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

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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 13 June 2025**, to us at 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.**

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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.

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