

The magazine for older people in Leeds

Shine

May 2021

WHO CARES? WE DO!

The story of how older people in Care Homes are coping with Covid.

PERSONAL STORIES

Finding my voice

One woman's battle to find her voice after growing up with a stutter.

IN CONVERSATION

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

We talk to Leeds Central MP Hilary Benn

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Shine is a magazine by and for older people in Leeds. We're part of Time to Shine, which focuses on preventing isolation and loneliness amongst older people. Time to Shine funds various projects across Leeds that use creative ways to engage people – some of these projects feature in our magazine. Linda Glew is Time to Shine Programme Manager and she introduces each issue.



By the time you read this shops, cafes and other amenities should be open again - some of us might have had the chance to share a meal or a drink with friends outdoors! Who knew that such simple pleasures would become such huge steps for us to take? Whatever your situation, we hope you are able to enjoy some of the restrictions being eased.

“As always this issue is packed with interesting stuff”

As always, this issue is packed with interesting stuff. Our main focus is on care homes in Leeds. How has a year in lockdown affected people who live in them and the lives of those who love them? There is also a great feature about the Great Outdoors project based in Kirkstall. They have such a wide range of activities there - from walking to whittling. If you fancy taking part, and appreciating the great outdoors post-lockdown, this is great place to start. We also have a feature on Pension Credits. Often going unclaimed, this benefit can make a real difference to our financial health - which can have a huge impact on our physical

and mental health. We also look back to when there was an open cast mine at Temple Newsam. It's hard to believe when you see the beautifully green landscape there now. We talk to some local men who spent their lives underground; they shared a great camaraderie with their mates. And we meet Labour MP for Leeds Central, Hilary Benn. Hilary shares stories from his childhood and his political career in an article full of optimism and hope.

As always, we have some lovely Shine a Light stories and columns written by local people, including Mercy's story of moving to Leeds from Zimbabwe and of lockdown loss. Paul and India tell us about their involvement in the wonderful intergenerational arts project at Leeds Playhouse and help us to understand how much people of different ages can learn from each other.

I have to say that we are very proud of our team of writers. They are doing a great job of gathering the stories and making sure that the voices of Leeds' older people are being heard. If you would like to tell your story, or join the writing team, do get in touch.

In the meantime: get comfy and enjoy the read!

Linda Glew
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Shine

At Shine we rely on our readers to provide stories. We're always looking for people to share their story. Do you have something to say? Maybe you're an aspiring writer, or maybe you just want to get something off your chest?

Send your story ideas to us in the following ways:

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Shine

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Every month we talk to an inspiring or interesting older person and delve a bit deeper into what makes them tick. Sometimes a Leeds person, sometimes someone fascinating from further afield. This month we are in conversation with Labour MP Hilary Benn.



You've got this proud sense of history and astonishing diversity of things happening in Leeds

Hilary Benn has been the Labour MP for Leeds Central since 1999. When Labour was in power, he was a member of the government, working in the Home Office and as International Development Secretary, amongst other roles. He was in the shadow cabinet for many years, though he's currently a backbencher.

Hilary was born in London 1953 to Tony and Caroline Benn. He's been involved with Labour politics all his life, at home as much as at work. Hilary's father was an MP – and so were his grandfather and two of his great-grandfathers! The family business extends to his niece Emily, who stood for parliament several times.

Hilary is married to Sally and the couple have 4 children. He's a teetotaler, a vegetarian and has a degree in Russian and east European Studies. Now 67, Hilary continues to support his constituents with energy and enthusiasm. "We all have a responsibility to play our part, to make it better," he says. "That is part of the purpose of life."

Hilary took time out of his busy schedule to talk on Zoom to Shine writer **Ruth Steinberg**.

I wanted to start with you being a 'Benn'. Give an insight into growing up in such a well-known political family. What was good about it and what do you think you missed out on?

It was a very, very happy childhood. I've got two brothers and a sister. We talked about what was going on in the world all the time. When you're little, you assume that all families are like your own, because it's the only one you know. When I got a bit older, I began to realise what it was that my father did and why people took an interest in what he did. I was never terribly keen on school, I have to confess, but we enjoyed family holidays and you know, all the interests that children and young people have. But what did I miss out on? Dad was away a lot because he was in Parliament, he was busy. But when he was at home he would be working in the basement and I'd go down either to say, "can you help me with my homework?" or "can I borrow the scissors or a bit of Sellotape?" Our mum organised our lives. Even though I followed my father and grandfather's footsteps I had to find my own way in the world.

Why did you decide to become an MP?

Well, when I was ten, I wanted to be a firefighter, because my grandfather took me to a display. ▶



“I’m an optimist. I believe we can change things for the better.”

I watched men from the London Fire Brigade running up ladders and reeling out hoses and that made a great impression on me - and I thought being a firefighter would be good. But then when that wore off, what I do now is all I ever wanted. Politics is a very uncertain business. The first two times I stood for parliament I lost. The first time I stood for the Council I lost. Luck plays a bit of a part. My father became an MP because Stafford Cripps died. I became an MP after my wonderful predecessor Derek Fatchett died and therefore there was a by-election.

Could you say something, as we're now getting older, about age versus youth in politics?

You have more experience. You've made more mistakes. And hopefully, I think that's the purpose of making mistakes, you learn from them. Being a politician is partly about being a problem solver, and sometimes the problems are very difficult, deep seated, and appear irreconcilable. I grew up in the 60s and the 70s. I remember the night I heard an IRA bomb go off, a sound that will always remain with me. I thought it was so close, I got up. It was actually in Chelsea, two or three miles away. But if you'd said to me then, "don't worry Hilary, one day Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness will sit side-by-side at the table as the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister for power sharing government in Northern Ireland" I might have said, "I don't think I'm going to see that in my lifetime". But I did and that shows the power of political leadership and courage. But, of course, youths have greater energy and you know the old saying of older people: "If only I had the knowledge I have now and the youth that I had then, oh, what might have been possible".

You've been an MP for over 20 years, what's changed over those 20 years?

Ah well, the way people communicate with us has changed. I suppose when I was first elected, a large pile of post would come, and emails weren't quite so many. Now the post is down here and email up to the ceiling and beyond. I suppose it's easy for a lot of people to contact their Member of Parliament, but of course not everyone is able to write an email or letter and that's why I worry about the absence of in person advice surgeries.

Obviously, Brexit has come along. There really wasn't much debate about leaving the European Union in 1999, when I was first elected. And it's changed a lot of things. It has bitterly divided the nation. I worry about our ability, in the words of Barack Obama, "to disagree agreeably". But I've also learned that Parliament is in many ways the clash of the parties. You vote for some things, against some things.

Legislation often underpins a change that is taking place in society anyway. You can't just legislate out of the blue for something if that isn't where society is. You know, when we were born, the idea that people would have been told you can't smoke on the bus ... there would be outrage. Then it changed to: if you wanted to smoke on the bus you had to move to the upper deck. Now there is no smoking in any public place.

Why can't Labour and Conservatives work together more on Covid?

I think in fairness that Keir Starmer has been doing a great job. He said throughout, "Look, where we agree with what the government is doing, we will support it." Keir is not interested in opposition for opposition's sake. And therefore, we have supported a number of measures and expressed our support. But Keir also says where we think the government got it wrong. Accountability and scrutiny are really important.

The vaccination programme has been an astonishing success. I pay tribute to the government for taking a punt on loads of different vaccines by putting in advance purchase orders, having no idea whether anyone of them would produce anything of any use.

I've had my first job. It was a really uplifting experience, joyful, welcoming. It made me feel very emotional because this is our National Health Service. This is another example of the power of politics to transform people's lives, which, being a Labour MP, I am very, very proud of. I think back to Nye Bevan and Clement Atlee. When I was 12, my dad took me to a Labour rally at the Albert Hall and he took me up to a frail old man. He said, "Hilary, this is Clement Atlee." I remember fleetingly meeting this man. He died, I think, the following year. He was the Prime Minister of an extraordinary post war Labour Government, which does tell you what you can do in a crisis. It makes governments do things that they might not do in ordinary circumstances. If someone said to Rishi Sunak prior to the pandemic, that you're going to pay the wages of nine million people, he might have thought "I can't see any circumstances in which this would happen", but it did. And rightly so.

You're a Londoner, talk to me about your connection with Leeds.

I should tell you that my great, great, great grandfather William was born in Hunslet in 1799, and his parents were married three years earlier in 1796 at the old Leeds Parish Church. William eventually moved to Manchester, met a woman and they had a child called Julius. The family eventually moved to East London where Julius ran a home for boys. He had a number

of children, but my direct descendant was John, who was elected to the London County Council and was briefly an MP, as was my grandfather William and then my father and then me. When I was elected my aunt said to me, "Hilary, you ought to look in the phone directory because there are more Benns in Leeds than there are Benns in the phone directory in London". I did look, and it was indeed true.

Leeds is a magical place. Last Saturday afternoon, for our exercise, my wife and I took a walk round Holbeck because I spend a lot of time in my little car whizzing around from appointment to appointment. We passed Marshall's Mill, the flax mill which shows Leeds's adaptability. About 700 people worked in that mill when it was a flax mill and about 700 people work in it today, but now they work in tech businesses. So, we have evolved and adapted. It has the same physical fabric, but it houses new industries. We walked past Temple Works, the wonderful Egyptian-fronted building with the glass skylights, and I hope that we're going to be able to do something with that as a city. So, you've got this proud sense of history and astonishing diversity of things happening in Leeds. Because unlike some other places, we, as a city, weren't wholly dependent or greatly dependant on one industrial sector. You got everything. When businesses think about moving to Leeds they see all that is on offer and what surrounds us in the glorious countryside of Yorkshire - what a wonderful place to be. It's a great city. A great, great city. Now I'm probably still regarded as a West Londoner by birth. It probably would be another 50 years before I finally am given local status. It's a great privilege to be the Member of Parliament for the heart of the city, but also for the inner city because of the contrast between rich and poor, prosperity and lack of opportunity. That is the greatest challenge we face in Leeds. It's the greatest challenge facing the country. It's the greatest challenge we face in the world. It's the same issue.

What do you think are the important issues for older people?

I support a number of organisations as a patron of, for example, Caring Together in Woodhouse and Little London, and as the patron of Holbeck Together. This used to be called Holbeck Elderly Aid, but changed its name because it's spreading out the range of activities. I see the work that they, and lots of other organisations working with older people, do in Leeds. Part of what they do is to provide friendship and to combat loneliness. We know that there's an epidemic of loneliness in society.

Leeds and the voluntary sector and the Council have

done a fantastic job. They have responded to people's needs to make sure that people don't go hungry, it's been positively inspirational. That's down to community spirit, community organisation. I think the biggest challenge we face is, of course, social care. There are three aspects of our health. There's our physical health, mental health, and that universal process known as ageing. Today I may be well, tomorrow may break my leg, the day after that I may be depressed and the day after that I will be old and I'm still the same person, but my needs have changed. I long for a time when we have a National Health and Social Care Service. There are older people who are in hospital beds in the LGI, or Jimmies, who don't need to be there for medical reasons, but they're there for want of somewhere suitable to discharge them to. We need to support the voluntary organisations working with older people because they provide this astonishing and wonderful range throughout the city, providing opportunity and hope. But we need to fix the system because it isn't working.

How has this pandemic affected you personally?

Well, not being able to do the job I've done for the last 21 years in the way that I've done it. As I mentioned earlier, to be able to get out and about, seeing people, meeting constituents. I do online surgeries now. But I worry about those who don't connect to that who would walk through the door because they knew that's where I would be found seven times a month in different locations around the constituency. It's obviously affected the way Parliament works. Parliament is otherwise deserted. At a personal level, it is not being able to see and hold our children, and grandchildren. Although we did have one grandchild and her mum and dad living with us for a while and that was a great joy.

What else brings you joy?

My family, reading, music, and being inspired by people. We talked about hope earlier and it's the most important thing we have to hang on to. Sometimes people ask me "how do you do this job?" and I say, "because I'm an optimist". I believe we can change things for the better. It's like climbing a mountain. You huff and you puff and then you stop, because you have to catch your breath - and every so often it pays just to look over your shoulder to see from whence you have come, because it gives you, and it gives each other encouragement, on to the next, on to the next.■

If you are one of Hilary's constituents and wish to contact him, phone 0113 2441097 or email hilary.benn.mp@parliament.uk

The garden that keeps me sane

*Every month we feature a column from the **Age Friendly Steering Group**. This issue, Robert E. Collins shares his thoughts about his garden. The last year has really highlighted how certain things can help with our mental well-being; for Robert his garden is a vital tool to keep him well. Illustration: Paul Atkinson*

I have always enjoyed my garden. It has given much pleasure over the years. I have always said that my garden has kept me sane; in common with most people, I have known very difficult times. It is wonderful how getting out into the garden, pottering about, or chatting to the plants - or just sitting-relaxes my pent-up spirits. I now live in a bungalow, with only a small garden. But it gives me much joy.

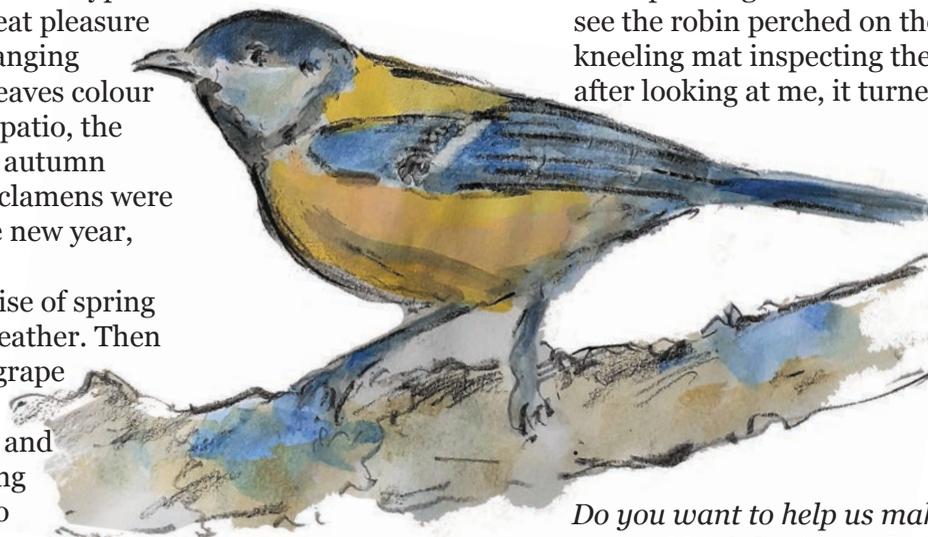
When Covid struck, I formed a bubble with my friend Sheila, who is now 95. At first, we went on walks in the local parks but finding that many people were completely ignoring the guidelines, I felt it was better to keep to our own gardens. I have a patio and Sheila loves to sit there and enjoy the flowers and other wildlife. Lavender and marjoram have invaded the patio, growing in cracks between the paving blocks and I have allowed it to remain in the central strip. Some large hollyhocks have also invaded. In the summer, I place pots of tender plants such as Fuchsias and Agapanthus. The insects particularly enjoy the lavender and marjoram; on a sunny day the plants are buzzing with bees and hoverflies. One day, I counted at least five types of bee. It is a great pleasure to watch the changing seasons as the leaves colour and die. On my patio, the colchicums and autumn crocuses and cyclamens were excellent. In the new year, the snowdrops brought a promise of spring in the coldest weather. Then the hellebores, grape hyacinths, daffodils, tulips and the myriad spring bulbs, leading to the full spring display. And so to summer again. It is lovely just to sit and relax. This year we have been able already to restart our enjoyment. On a sunny day in February, we sat for

over two hours admiring the snowdrops, crocuses and small irises in the troughs and tubs. As spring has developed, we are able to spend more time outside. It lifts the spirits and there is so much to see and feel. However small the garden, there are always things to do. I can forget my worries, even if I am only pottering about and chatting to the plants; they do appreciate it. Throughout my life I have found my garden to be a saviour. Now that I am alone and a widower, it has become even more important for me. I can forget loneliness in my garden.

One way of increasing nature in the garden is to feed the birds. I have nowhere to hang feeders, so I use an area of the patio and feed them there. I put out a general feed and a feed for the robins. Whilst it did not attract the robins, the blackbirds love it. I also get ring doves, magpies and sparrows. And one day a great tit came momentarily. I am also lucky in that I have a kite which regularly flies over my garden; it must be part of its territory. It is a sight to see it fly over, especially when it flies low, emitting loud 'mews'. As the weather improved, a robin turned up to see what grubs I might have unearthed. One day I left the area I was planting and came back a few minutes later to see the robin perched on the side handle of my kneeling mat inspecting the ground. It saw me and after looking at me, it turned and flew off.

My garden has become more vital than ever, even if it is only to sit in it and relax.

During the last year of social isolation, it has become so important for my mental health and wellbeing.■



Do you want to help us make Leeds a great city to grow old in? Get in touch if you are interested in joining the Age Friendly Steering Group: sarah@opforum.org.uk and jude@opforum.org.uk or call 0113 244 1697. You can find more details at the Time to Shine website at timetoshineleeds.org

Normality & Uncertainty (Part 2)

Last month, Nasreen Hanif recounted how 10 years ago she suffered a period of mental ill-health and found it hard to leave the house. In her darkest moment she stumbled across a book that really helped. How did she get herself out of her own personal “lockdown”?

The book I read was really helpful. What were the main things I learned? Firstly, that our mental well-being stands on three legs: our environment, our place in society (our job role or “status”) and our personal relationships. Not only should these be resilient and well balanced, they must also be sources of positivity. Secondly, we should all have a “wallpaper” moment. When the mind switches off and is at peace. It could be watching a TV drama, doing a craft, gardening, baking - whatever. Over time, I have realised this has become more and more important. On social media (like Facebook and Twitter) I find news headlines, celebrity gossip and so much triviality that pulls people in and causes distress. I confess I am guilty of reading all this too! I can’t begin to imagine what this does to people constantly on social media. Finally, for those of us who are “perfectionists”, the “Leave the Hoover in the middle of the room” test! I struggle with this as I always want to complete all my tasks, no matter how late it gets or how hungry I am.

Our well-being is dependent on our standing. When the legs we stand on are taken away, we have to adapt to using crutches until we can take our weight again and walk. The first thing is to accept that it happened – and that is so difficult to do. One of my “crutches” was finding out about MIND and staying in one of their respite flats to escape the anxiety associated with my own house. I also knew I had to cling on to hope. I did this by writing: remembering who I was, what I had done,



what I’d like to do, what I thought I could do and what I hoped to do. Then I focussed on building a routine. It was helpful to have already set a schedule for each day the night before. Most important of all was to try to maintain some kind of human contact or communication, as I lived on my own with a family across the Pennines. I became a member of the National Trust to forget for a short time what I had to face in my own home and instead relish the beauty, cerebral pursuit and company I found in their properties and gardens.

Looking back at that list of hope, I am amazed that four years after I let go the reins of “normality”, I was offered a job in Abu Dhabi. I had no plans or intention to go overseas again to work, but as it became increasingly difficult to regain a professional role at my previous level I had had to leave. I had applied out of frustration. One of my motivating notes had been: “One day I will wear some of my beautiful summery clothes in warm weather”. And I did! So, taking the path of “uncertainty” to a country where the warmth and light restored my confidence and healed some of the mental damage was an unexpected remedy.

There is no doubt I will always carry the mental scars of that debilitating experience with me. And some of it may still hinder me in other parts of my life.

However, my survival had to come from my inner strength, even at a point of weakness. The similarity with the Covid situation is stark: some of the “legs” have gone for many people: the nights out at the pub, the socialising at restaurants or meeting up with friends, but others do remain such as the ability to take walks and exercise.

Crutches have emerged for some: more talking on the phone or using video links etc. Where they haven’t, it is imperative you create your own structure: draw on that inner strength. It is there. ■

Who Cares?

Every month we look at an issue that is important to older people at Leeds. This time we focus on care homes. There are over a hundred care homes in Leeds. How have older people and their carers coped with Covid and the grief and isolation it has brought?

At care homes across Leeds, families are finally uniting. On March 8th 2021, Covid restrictions eased and residents of care homes could nominate one person to visit them. Their visitor must test negative for the virus, wear personal protective equipment (PPE), and try not to have too much physical contact. And the care home must allow it. Even so, this is a huge step. Husbands and wives; parents and children; friends – people are finally able to see loved ones. The Yorkshire Post has been featuring some of these good news stories, most notably that of Francis Heaton, who was able to celebrate her 100th birthday with family at the end of March.

More good news: infections amongst residents of care homes are falling. Research has shown that residents who have been vaccinated against Covid have a much lower risk of infection. Even after just one dose, they were 62% less likely to have the infection after 5 weeks. This research by University College London recently shows a simple fact: the vaccine is working!

The Simple Things

Even with hope on the horizon, it's important we address what a difficult year it's been for home residents and their families. Lives have been lost and lives have been damaged. People have been isolated and frustrated. Everyone's lives have changed, but perhaps none more so than those of older people who live in care homes. Sometimes it's the simple things that are missed. Graham, one of the Shine writing team, had started helping out in a care home just before the pandemic. He recounts one of his first visits here:

"I have experience as a volunteer in a residential home in Horsforth which, sadly, was a short one. I was there as a befriender, my remit being to interact with the few male residents. They tended not to take part in any of the numerous activities. I knew it wouldn't be easy

We Do

when I introduced myself to Bill and he just said, 'What was the point?' He had nothing he wanted to say!

This seemed to be the shared reaction of the male residents, until I called on Ray, a guy who loved his music and enjoyed playing snooker in his day. I like a game myself, so he suggested we go to the local club. He met me in reception on a mobility scooter. On seeing how quickly he sped off, I had new name for him: Rocket Man Ray. He was half-way down Town Street before I caught up with him. That's when I found out I could no longer sprint. He went straight past the club and I found him in the bookies. Must be a third love of his.

He beat me at snooker, but I enjoyed his company, and we did it every week until last year's lockdown. That was the last I saw of him. I'm not allowed to visit the home due to restrictions. A nurse who works there tells me Ray is not the same man due to losing his wanderings. What in impact this pandemic is having!"

A Huge Change

It seems so insignificant, going to the local snooker club and popping into the betting shop on the way. But such small pleasures are what can make life meaningful, especially if you are in poor health. So many older people across the city have had their lives dramatically altered. What does it feel like, to be an older person in a similar situation? Betty, another Shine writer, recounts her experiences below. Betty lives with her husband in "sheltered housing accommodation", which means she lives independently in a self-contained flat but with communal facilities and support. Many of our readers live in similar situations; often there are wardens who help with the running of the complex and social activities. Over to Betty:

"Two years ago, we moved into our apartment, and because we had a restaurant open for lunch every day and a staff member to clean once a week, I became a lady of leisure. We became friends with most of the residents through the varied social activities. We could choose from an exercise class, art class, writing group, a quiz night or of course a Bingo night. There were often concerts by choirs, and special events nights to be enjoyed by all."

Sounds pretty good, doesn't it! What happened when the pandemic hit? ►



“ Suddenly we were in lockdown,
not allowed to mix with
relations or friends.
All activities suspended ”

“Suddenly we were in lockdown, not allowed to mix with relations or friends. All activities suspended, restaurant closed, cleaners left. We had to wear a face mask whenever we went outside our front door, hardly recognising one another, not able to stand and chat with each other. Not knowing who was ill or well. Our usual gossip area was the Laundry, but only one person at a time could use the facilities at a time. No gossip!

The first couple of weeks went by, the virus spread even further. All of a sudden, I found it hard to be my usual cheerful self. Depression set in, I found it hard having to do my own housework and I was not getting any younger. Having to order, prepare and cook meals, especially after being spoiled since living here with all its amenities, became harder. It was a real culture shock. My depression became worse. My husband and I kept falling out over the silliest of things. We would make-up and then two days later would fall out again. It is now over a year since the first lockdown. A year of being kept in the apartment. Virtually the whole time just the two of us - no visits from my daughters to relieve the strain. The seemingly never-ending round of cooking, cleaning, disinfecting everywhere to keep us safe. Most of all it is not seeing family and friends that is so distressing.”

Emotional Impact

Family and friends of older people who live in care homes are particularly concerned for their loved ones and their emotional well-being. There are some people who are trying to shed light on these issues.

Healthwatch Leeds was set up in 2013 to bring the voices and opinions of local people to influence health and care decisions. Healthwatch has been talking to relatives of older people about the impact of the Covid restrictions and they've put together a report to share the findings. They have allowed us to share some quotes from that report. One relative put it well: “we are essential to the wellbeing of our families' lives”. It's hard to argue with that.

The restrictions are hard for everybody, but particularly for older people who are living with Alzheimer's or dementia. “My mum cries every day,” said one relative. “Her paranoia has increased, and her Alzheimer's has deteriorated. She has forgotten people now and is forgetting conversations and little things that she knew how to do before. In four years, we have seen or talked to each other every day, so it has affected both of us.” Heartbreaking. Some older people rely hugely on the daily visits of family and carers, even for basic tasks such as eating. Many have seen their condition get worse. “I cannot help feeling that isolation has played a big part in my mum's

deterioration,” said another family member. “She has Alzheimer's, she misses my regular visits. She still knows me, and I used to visit every other day. We are very close.”

This is an area where digital technology can help – but it's not always the panacea it's made out to be. Many older people have benefitted hugely from being able to use iPads or smart phones to make video calls to grandchildren and other friends and family. But for others, especially people with limited speech and understanding, there's nothing that beats face-to-face contact. For lots of people, touch is the most important sense. Sometimes it's hard for families to know how their loved ones are doing. “It's hard to tell over the phone or Skype as it's such a short period of time,” said one relative. “We get to know more from the care team, who we trust.”

A Tale of Two Care Homes

It can be difficult to find yourself in a care home. It's a huge wrench for families and loved ones too. Mally and Maureen both have had friends in care homes, and they share their thoughts below. Mally first. Jim developed dementia (an “unwelcome intruder” according to Mally) and his wife Pat had to face the prospect of living separately from him.

“Pat was a daily visitor. She knows that her frequent visits ensured the best possible care for Jim for she was able to not only make good relationships with the staff but was also able to pick up on any issues that arose and affected Jim's well-being. At one point his behaviour changed, and Pat discovered that the Aricept he was prescribed was deemed too expensive and stopped. The medication was reinstated at Pat's insistence. She realised he was more comfortable going to the toilet rather than using a bed pan and the reason he was refusing his porridge was because it was being served without syrup. These small issues ensured Jim's comfort and well-being; Pat is sure these issues wouldn't have been addressed if she had not been such a presence in the home. Pat knows she did the best for this man with whom she had shared so many good years but wonders how he would have been cared for if she hadn't been his advocate.”

Fan Club

Mally's friend Pat was an integral part of Jim's care “team”. There are so many families doing similar amazing work across the city – and to exclude them by denying visitors has been very difficult.

Maureen's friend Val had to go and live in a care home last year. The friends met in 1962 as part of The Shadows Fan Club! Since then, they've always shared

he ups-and-downs of life. Maureen takes up the story:

“Twelve years ago, Val suffered a brain aneurysm and was not expected to live - but live she did, making a good recovery, until a stroke then left her with slurred speech and limited mobility. Anxiety and depression followed, and Val lost interest in everything, speaking only of her ailments. Unable to perform the simplest tasks resulted in daily visits by carers. Accepting of the situation, Val’s daughter found a lovely care home, providing all the 24-hour care needed.

Lockdown

Unfortunately, the move coincided with lockdown last March so daily visits were replaced by FaceTime via phone. Initially speaking to the staff more than residents, my pen-friend gradually settled in. No longer mentioning her ailments, she spoke instead of the fun and laughter, enjoyed through activities held almost daily. Val’s mental health improved significantly. On sunny days games and themed events with delicious meals were held on the lawn. Through the care home’s Facebook page, I can follow weekly updates, with photos of happy times being enjoyed by all.

As lockdown restrictions tightened, appointments had to be made to see a loved one at the front door, with visitors wearing a mask, apron and gloves. Val was allowed to visit the hairdresser with her daughter, followed by precautionary quarantine in her room for seven days. At Christmas, each resident was allowed one visitor on presentation of a negative Covid test.

The residents now meet up with their chosen family member, following safety guidelines, in the garden. A specially designed see-through dome with comfortable seating and table for two has been welcomed by all. All having had their second vaccine now, Val and her new friends look forward to the day when they can escape to the country or coast for an outing – just like the rest of us!”

Domes in Homes

Part of Maureen’s story bears repeating: “A specially designed see-through dome with comfortable seating and table for two”! What an incredible solution to Covid restrictions! And there are other ways that care homes are adapting to provide the best experience under very trying circumstances. As we know, many activities have stopped. So, one activities co-ordinator had a bright idea: “We have prepared an activity bag which consist of things like coloured pencils, paper crosswords and residents’ favourite magazines. We know it was safe to leave those in residents’ rooms to keep them occupied. The bags have been topped up

all the time. They have proven to be a great way of maintaining residents’ wellbeing.”

There are hundreds of these inventive ideas, to bring joy to the lives of older people. Last summer Arts Together paid musicians, poets, opera singers and other artists to perform in the grounds of care homes. One of the performers was Tessa Smith: “It is a real joy to go and sing for the residents, and see how much they enjoy listening, singing and dancing along to the music. I feel very lucky to be able to provide this entertainment in these settings; it raises my spirits as much as it does theirs!” Jo Bailey, Wellness Co-ordinator at one of the care homes involved, agrees. “Having Tessa really brightened up everyone’s day and brought them together,” said Jo. “It made such a difference being a live performance, and everyone appreciated being given the chance to enjoy a musical interlude from such a talented singer.”

Some care homes have gone the extra mile to keep residents safe and well. Staff at Meadow Court Residential Home near Huddersfield all agreed to “move in” on site! Staff members and directors lived in a series of motorhomes, away from their families for several weeks. All to make sure they didn’t pass on the virus to vulnerable residents.

The Future

What next for older people living in care homes? As restrictions ease, it’s hopeful that life will improve. As it does, we must keep in our mind the pain and suffering of the last year or so. The easing of restrictions comes too late for many. We must keep supporting friends, family and staff to come up with ideas to care for older people creatively and kindly. Healthwatch has a series of recommendations, chiefly that when it comes to visits, that lawmakers “weigh up potential benefits to an individual’s wellbeing and quality of life against the potential risks to residents, staff and other visitors”. Whatever happens in the future, it’s vital that older people living in care homes in Leeds know that they are not forgotten. If you’re in this situation, you need to know that all of us are thinking of you. That as a city, we will support you. That we won’t forget you. We care. ■

Do you live in residential care? Or does one of your family members? Please get in touch with Shine if you have a story you’d like to share. We may print it in a future issue! If you have any concerns or worries about seeing a loved one in their care home, or if you just need help understanding what is currently allowed, you can call Carers Leeds on 0113 380 4300 or Healthwatch Leeds on 0113 8980035.

The Great Outdoors

**“A lot
of our
projects start
with people.
The activities
are a very good
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something to do,
an excuse to
meet up”**

Every month we focus on a project funded by Time to Shine to see how they support older people in Leeds. This month we hear about The Great Outdoors project. We talked to Garden Project Officer Anne Proud and she told us all about it.





The
Conservation
Volunteers

My Time to Shine

The Great Outdoors is the Time to Shine project that is run at Hollybush. I came into the project about 18 months ago and I'm currently the only member of staff.

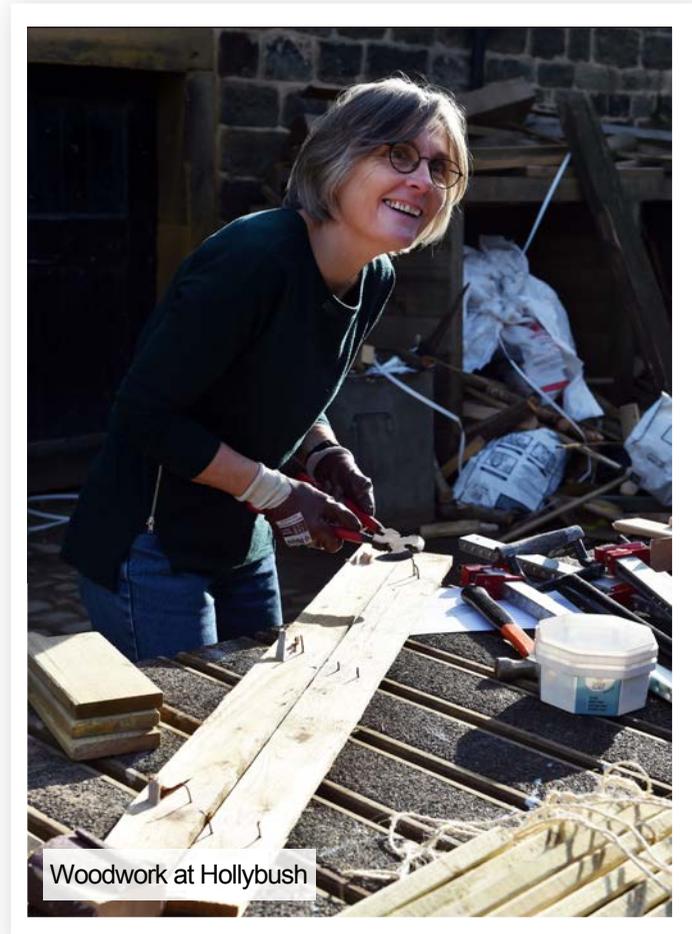
Hollybush is a conservation centre in Kirkstall that comes under the banner of TCV. It's been there for a long time – local people know it as this centre for conservation. We've got wood-working workshops, polytunnels, a garden, woodland, ponds – all sandwiched in this tiny sliver of land between the canal and the river, with the main road on one side. As you're sat in the garden the buses go by and you can hear people on their phones!

Our remit is older people over 50. A lot of the people who come to our projects tend to be long-term unemployed, or they struggle with their mental health, or people who are just isolated. We sometimes get referrals through the health service, through BARCA and Touchstone ringing us up. Word of mouth is a big one. Anyone who comes to sign up at Hollybush signs up as a volunteer. This creates a general sense of a hugely diverse group of people coming together.

We've had a number of projects. Wood Squad is for people who've done short woodwork courses, working with Tom our carpenter. Whittling Wednesday – which I think will be renamed Whittling Tuesday – is out in the woods in a new structure called the Bird's Nest, with our new whittler Donovan. They work with green wood – but there's also a lot of drinking tea. They build a fire - and you know what people are like with a fire! People love to poke it and play with it. They've got this big black kettle where they brew up.

We've got two satellite sites. One at Armley Medical Practice. Our team got some funding and they built raised beds. We're hoping to start that back up soon. That's mainly for people who go to that medical centre – or anyone in the Armley area. And we started one at Fairfield Community Centre in Bramley. I'm in a wind band and we used to rehearse there – I noticed the raised beds and thought they could do with a bit of work. So, we started a monthly group. We've tapped in with the Bramley Care Bears, who are great.

I've run a walking group at Hollybush for about four years now. Pre-Covid, it was a weekly group, every Monday. People would come into Hollybush and we'd drive in the minibus to different nature reserves and green areas across Leeds. We'd have a member of staff to lead the walk and another one to mentor people. It's good to have two members of staff because conversations happen – and people like to find out about other activities at Hollybush. There's a lot of courses at Hollybush, a lot of them are free to people



on benefits. Woodworking, Practical Conversation skills (like tree-felling, dry-stone walling, coppicing) Craft courses (basket weaving, felt-making), Gardening and more.

We should all be back up-and-running by the time this article appears. The walking group has carried on in-between strict lockdowns. So, people who normally do gardening or woodwork have come on the walks. We've moved the walks to where people live so that they didn't have to go on buses. I've done walks all over Leeds now.

A lot of our projects start with people. The activities (like gardening, whittling or walking) are a very good way of giving us something to do, an excuse to meet up. If you're feeling a bit "wobbly" it might be easier to tell people you're going to do a bit of gardening or go to a walking group, rather than go to a specific support group. There's no stigma. Particularly with older blokes. Being outdoors is an added bonus. If you're sat outside, with an open fire, you can see people just going, "Ahhhh!" People love the actual physical process of woodworking. And the conversations people have are amazing. It's my role to create those relaxed spaces outside, with practical things to do, and people talking to each other. The social side is huge.

Trying to re-introduce our tea breaks is one of our

priorities at the moment. On the walks we used to have a good half hour tea break, with a choice of cakes. It was a real ritual. It's not the same, bringing your own flask. We have to recognise that these things are important. A lot of people are very nervous about going out again. I know some people are struggling. We have to adapt, to suit where people are at.

Liz Boyd is a volunteer on the project; we spoke to her about why she loves The Great Outdoors.

Why did you get involved?

I joined Hollybush after I retired. It will be 6 years in June. I joined the gardening group. I knew that I had to have some structure in my life – I'm not very good at structure. It was my boss that said, "have you made an appointment at Hollybush yet?" I hadn't – but I eventually did and started there soon after. I remember my first day. I was weeding, and thinking, "I don't know what I'm doing here, because I should be in my own garden doing this. I think I might have made a mistake." But then I realised it's not just about what you do, it's about the people you're with. I've met people there who I wouldn't have met in normal circumstances. And they've become important relationships.

It grew and grew, and I got more involved. I became a volunteer officer quite quickly and went on leadership training. It's my responsibility to lead a group of about 5 or 6 people on a task. Tasks vary – we've got a front garden and I've had quite a lot to do with that. People vary with what they can and can't do. Some have no experience of gardening; others have lots of experience: it doesn't really matter. I used to think it really mattered if you didn't accomplish everything you were asked to do. But in the end, it depends on the circumstances and who you've got in your group.

At one point Anne said, "can somebody start to create



Regular group walks – taken before Covid

a little orchard patch?" So, we did - and we've got two apple trees there now. They're only little but they produced fruit last year. That was quite an accomplishment! You learn to do things you wouldn't have done before. It was quite hard work, we had to move a lot of roots.

We have various raised beds that we look after. I did a lot of barrowing before Christmas. I don't know how I did that! Barrowing great loads of mud from one place to another. The strength exercises I've been doing came in handy! Sometimes it's hard work, sometimes it's easier, but you do get a sense of achievement, especially working together with other people.

What are the benefits for you?

It's good to think you're doing something useful. You're helping to maintain the garden. But it's the people too. Quite a lot of people do rely on the garden for social contact. There are people with various disabilities. The relationships you make keep you going. And being outside - I just love being outside. There's only been 2 or 3 times where I've been absolutely soaked at Hollybush. When I've got in the car afterwards and thought, "I'm actually wet right through." But being outside and doing something with other people is great.

How have you been involved since Covid hit last year?

I think it was July I came back onsite. Freya tasked me to come in and clear a few weeds around the orchard. We were also doing litter-picking around the area. It's not my favourite activity! But lots of people come along and you meet them and it's really quite nice. And the walks, on and off. They had to shut down for a bit. But they're back now. We used to have a proper walking group on a Sunday. All day walks. We don't do that any more. At first, I thought, "I don't want to go on these little walks, they're not for me." But again, it's the social thing. You meet people you haven't seen for a bit, different people at different locations. It's more of a stroll, but that's fine. I haven't gone back to Hollybush yet, but I will go back. I've kept in contact over Zoom. I'm in no hurry but I will be there soon.■

Thanks Liz and Anne.

You can find out more about the Great Outdoors by contacting Anne Proud at Hollybush.

Phone: 0113 2742335

Email: a.proud@tcv.org.uk

Website: tcv.org.uk



Finding my Voice

Sharon Benson has had a stutter since childhood. In this month's Shine a Light section, she tells us how she overcame her speech problems and how she now helps and inspires others. Plus: we hear about Mercy's eventful lockdown; and drop in on a conversation between two artists, Paul and India.

Sharon Benson tells the story of her stutter and how she overcame it. She's stuttered since she was a child, and it was only much later that the problem was properly addressed. Little did she know that her journey would take her all over the UK and involve meeting a certain stuttering celebrity! Sharon recounts her inspirational story below.

Some people may inherit a picture or maybe a piano, but I inherited a stutter! My father, uncle and grandfather all had a stutter. By the age of seven years, it became evident that I too was to face a long battle. Visits to a speech therapist were unsuccessful and I was still unable to even say my name! There were other therapists and courses available, but my family were unable to afford the expensive fees.

School was a constant uphill struggle, being so self-conscious with my speech. I loved English language and literature, always receiving the highest marks which placed me top of the class. Geography and history I excelled at too - but maths was a different story. I was never good at maths. And as for needlework ... it took me a year to make my cookery apron and cap! It was the written word which fascinated me though. During my schooldays I started writing poetry which I continue to do now.

When the time came for me to leave Stainbeck Secondary School, it was more turmoil, as I didn't know what I wanted to do. Office work would be fine, as long as I didn't have to meet my biggest fear – answering the telephone. Mum couldn't accept my explanation and fears; she was convinced I was trying to get out of working, but this certainly wasn't the case at all. I did find a job, desperately trying to control the stutter and avoiding the telephone, but constantly felt my life was on hold. Every day was a challenge. Instead of ordering food I wanted to eat I was stuck with eating what I could ask for. Travelling by bus filled me with dread; knowing I wouldn't be able to ask for a ticket. I had to write down my destination and show the driver.

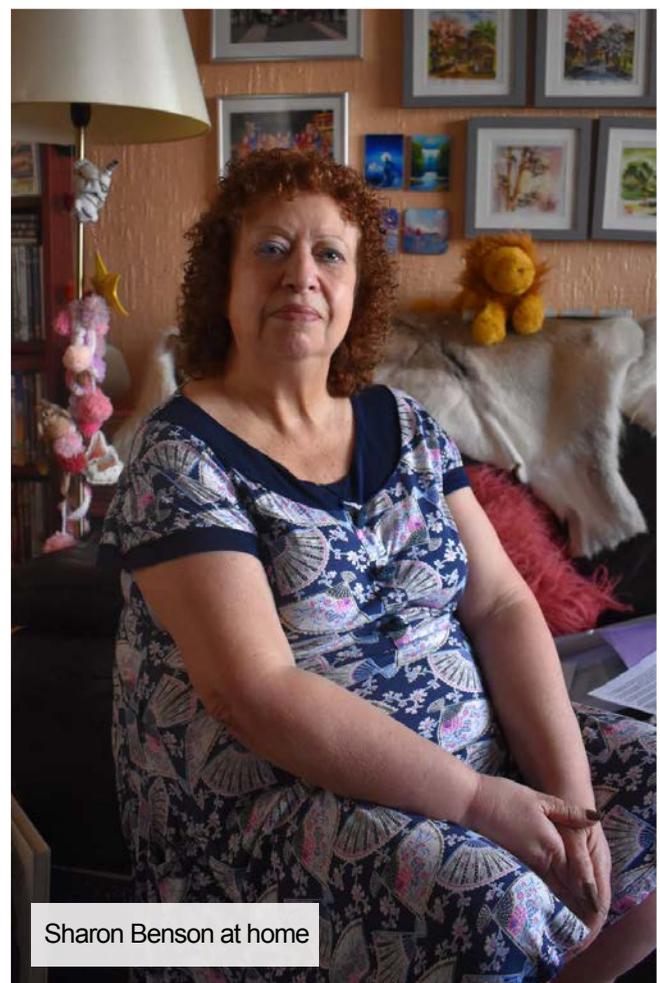
Travelling

I loved travelling though, something I still enjoy now, and worked as an au pair in Italy. In 1973, I spent time on a Kibbutz in Israel, where I celebrated my 21st birthday. I spoke both Italian and Hebrew but wherever I travelled, my stutter went with me.

When Mum died, leaving me an inheritance, I knew instantly what I was going to do. I'd heard and read about The McGuire Programme, an intensive course, and was determined to give it a try. It was probably my last hope. "Beyond Stuttering" said the literature

– oh, if only I could overcome it. The McGuire Programme was founded in 1994; its successes are down to combining physical techniques, through breathing and relaxation, and the teaching of how to overcome one's fears surrounding stuttering and stammering (which it is also referred to as). Apparently, the condition is more common in men than women, although there appears to be no clear reason for this. The repeating of sounds and syllables together with words desperately trying to come out, but refusing to do so, can leave the sufferer with many hurdles in everyday life.

I was determined to enrol for one of their residential courses, no matter where in the country they were held. I did in fact sign up for a total of nine! All were held in different towns and cities including London, Coventry, Manchester, Bournemouth and Dundee.



Sharon Benson at home

Shine a Light Stories

An expensive venture, but I needed the experience and if I could be helped to overcome my stutter, then it would be worth every penny.

Each course ran from Wednesday until Sunday. I was really scared of meeting everyone at the first one in particular. No amount of reading the information beforehand could prepare me for the actual experience.

The programme

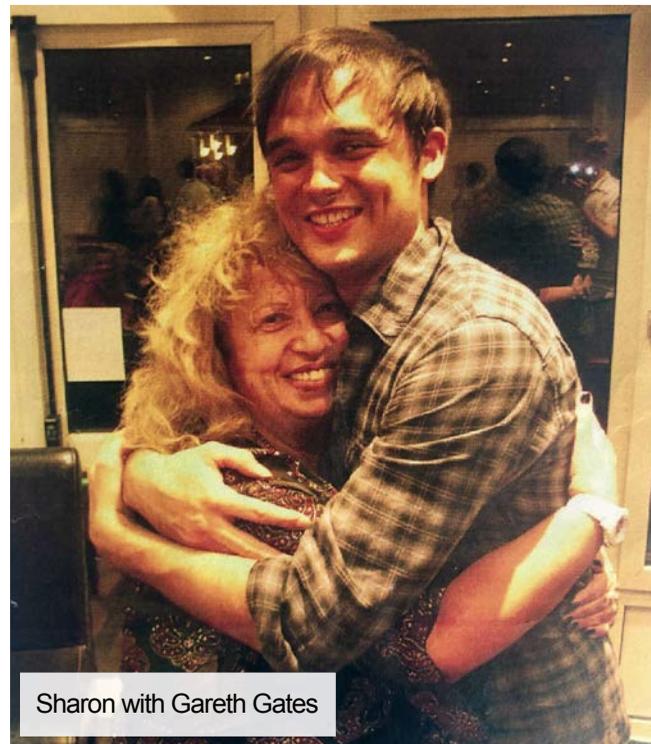
The first evening was a “getting to know you” session when each participant had to introduce themselves. Oh, the fear of that! It didn’t matter that everyone before me had struggled and those following would similarly do so – I was centre stage at that point and I was terrified! Already regretting my decision to attend, I was prompted with, “aren’t you going to say your name?” After what seemed like an hour, I managed it. So that was the first hurdle out of the way. I was amongst many others, all at different levels with their stutter - some being much worse than myself. We were united in trying to find our voice, but were struggling with what could be best described as an instrument of torture!

Our coaches were allocated, and we commenced the following morning at 7.00am. A full day of learning breathing techniques - certainly the hardest day of the Course. They were long days too, not finishing until 10pm. Gradually there were signs of hope. On the Saturday our coach took us into the town centre where we were really put to the test. Our task was to approach strangers and speak to them! Introducing myself I had to say I was doing the McGuire Programme and take it from there. Some people apologised with “no time” but others stopped and listened to what I had to say. I gradually got into it and managed a couple of sentences. The course in London was the most scary of all, with us travelling to Speakers Corner in Hyde Park. Yes, we had to stand on the customary soapbox to speak! On the final evening family or friends were invited to join us, when they could witness the fruits of our labours! My friends couldn’t believe the results and shared my success, observing that not only had I found my voice but also a new confidence. I had to agree with them. I did have more confidence in myself and I wasn’t going to stop there.

Gareth Gates

It was during my time spent with the McGuire organisation that I had the pleasure of meeting the singer Gareth Gates! Bradford-born Gareth was runner-up to Will Young on television’s ‘Pop Idol’ in 2002. Since childhood he had had a stammer

undergoing speech therapy and hypnotherapy but without success. Concentrating on his music he found that although struggling constantly with his speech, he was unaffected when singing. We use a separate part of our brain to process speech and to sing; something I have found in my life too, when reading my many poems. Following his TV success which led to fame as a pop singer, Gareth joined the



Sharon with Gareth Gates

McGuire Programme and is now a Speech Coach with the organisation. What a nice down-to-earth young man he is. It was delightful to meet him, being photographed with him too.

Continuing with the Programme, there was always more to be gained and I was hungry to learn. My life was changing beyond belief and there were so many opportunities awaiting me. I joined two friendship groups, one of which was in danger of folding. They were in need of a new Chair – so I put my hand up, volunteering to take on the role! My offer accepted, I introduced guest speakers, feeling comfortable and confident now.

So many new opportunities were available to me and in my next venture, I was to become a member of Toastmasters, an international organisation which helps participants overcome their fear of public speaking. Through their classes I learnt a range of communication skills, from making eye contact to humour. Overall, it is the encouragement of self-development and gaining of further confidence in the art of public speaking. Following presentation of one

particular speech, I was delighted to be awarded a congratulatory ribbon in recognition of being the best speaker! There was no stopping me now, but I continued with the McGuire Programme, attending an improvement course held fortnightly in Dewsbury.

My hobbies and interests have increased over the years. I've always loved singing and theatre, so in joining Swarthmore Centre in Leeds further opportunities arose. The drama group was fun and didn't present any problems, as I was able to hide behind a character!

I've spoken about my life changing experiences at a few schools and written articles, but it is the talks and meeting people I enjoy most. When the pandemic hit and we went into lockdown, as with everyone, I had to find other things to do. I still enjoy the written word, both with language and literature, so always have a book to hand - then there's television. As a member of Bramley Elderly Action, I play bingo over the telephone, belong to a reading group and I look forward to giving a talk when we re-open. Ideas often pop up in my head for another poem too, but no matter how we keep ourselves busy. Nothing beats being together with family and friends, does it? How I long for that day!

It took 53 years to find my voice. Occasionally tiredness or stress may cause a slight hesitation in my speech. Certain words can be awkward such as those starting with "st" or "e" as in elf, however as an Aunt said to me, "It's a miracle!" I'm inclined to agree.



Sharon with one of her inspirational postcards

Changing The Words
A poem by Sharon Benson

I couldn't say muffin, I couldn't say butter,
If I ordered a burger I'd stumble and stutter.
So instead of me saying the words that I could,
I'd swap them for others that sounded as good.

But you can't always leave out words that you dread,
There are times when certain things have to be said.
My friend is called Joan, my best friend is Mary
And everything seems to get rather contrary.

Whenever I spotted a difficult sound,
I'd hastily juggle my sentence around.
I spent so much energy word-rearranging,
Whenever I spoke I was chopping and changing.

My efforts to search for an easier word,
Resulted in sentences sometimes absurd.
At times my selections just didn't make sense,
Which made me more anxious, frustrated and tense.

Each time I avoided a troublesome sound,
I felt rather guilty and very soon found,
That my fear of speaking increased even more;
The number of problem-words started to soar.

In time I discovered that word-substitution,
Was simply avoidance and not a solution.
Though I was fluent - or so it appeared -
The words I avoided became much more feared.

One day I decided enough was enough:
I made myself promise, although it was tough,
To say what I wanted, whatever the letter.
At times I still struggled but I felt so much better.

Today I will say any letter or sound,
Confronting my fears is the best way I found.
Should I ever be tempted to waver sometime,
I'll remember the message contained in this rhyme.■

Sharon was talking to Maureen Kershaw.

Thank you Sharon.

You can find more information about stuttering and ways to help with speech at www.mcguireprogramme.com.

The NHS also has a specialised speech therapy service in Leeds.

Contact them on 0113 8434331
or email

stammeringsupportcentre@nhs.net.

Our Creative Journey

Leeds Playhouse is currently bringing older and younger generations together on Zoom to fuse their creative energy. The project, Reasons to be Hopeful, aims to gather artwork into a multi-media tapestry. We spoke to two artists involved in the project: Paul and India.

Paul and India are two artists who have connected over Zoom – they’ve never met in real life! We listened in to their conversation about art, age and more.

India: As a student I don’t get a chance to be part of the wider Leeds community. So being part of this group was a really exciting prospect. You get bored of the student bubble. The collaboration is so lovely. We get introduced to lots of ideas at the start of the session. Every week we get a different creative exercise to do, and we share what we’ve been doing as “homework”. Everyone gets a chance to say what they feel about other people’s work. Paul shared some of his work the other day. We all get to talk about our own work. It’s good to get out of your own head and talk about what you’re thinking. And other people get to chip in too. It makes you think of things from a different perspective.

Paul: It’s constructive criticism. What India brings out, she makes you think, she gives you that confidence. I usually do three, four, five ideas and people can give feedback on which ones they like. I always remember, a hundred years ago, when I was at art college, the tutor would ask people what they thought of our artwork, then he’s absolutely pull each of us to bits! It was strange, but it worked.

Look at any picture, a painting: everyone will have a different view of it. It’s stimulating. It doesn’t matter how old anyone is. I’ve got four grandchildren. One of them is 13. We talk about art; she paints as well. I find her stimulating too. She’s got her own views. Her views on the sculpture I’m making. Like with India, she made a lot of comments about the work we’ve done in the last three or four weeks. And she’s right!

India: I do agree with Paul, in that it doesn’t matter

how old you are. With art especially. Art can be anything nowadays. You can work with any age group and you can learn something from anyone. As a young person, I do think I can learn lots from older participants. That’s one of my favourite things about it. I keep yabbering on to my housemates about it. It’s so great! After the year we’ve had it’s really lovely to get to speak to people you wouldn’t normally have chance to, everyone on their creative journeys. Emotionally it feels so lovely.

Paul: One word always appeals to me: “passion”. If you don’t put effort in, you don’t get anything back. I love the different styles of illustration and the views the young people have. They make you think, make you go deeper. And they give you enthusiasm. I used to be a youth leader. You see a lot of propaganda about anti-young people. But I’ve always been interested in what young people have to say. My granddaughter has a great sarcasm!

India: The main thing for me is being equals - and hearing stories from some of the older people in the group. To some extent I’ve been shielded from the worst aspects of the pandemic. I live with 10 other students, so I’ve got a lot of social interaction.

And I’m used to using digital communication. But to sit with older people and hear their stories, that really moved me. There’s an older lady who has found a passion for writing. And we also share a favourite film, [Julie and Julia starring Meryl Streep]. To hear her talking about writing was really moving. It’s important older people’s stories are heard. It’s not really about older people – it’s just about people. ■

Look out for the tapestry appearing at Leeds Playhouse very soon!



Remembering my mum

Mercy Ndoro was born in Zimbabwe and came to the UK 20 years ago. Mercy tells the story of how she came to this country and how she suffered a terrible loss during the pandemic.

I came to the UK from Zimbabwe in July 2002. I had just turned 30. It was difficult thing - I was splitting with my first husband. My mum spoke to my auntie, they arranged for me to come over.

At first it was quite difficult because things were not as easy as I thought they were going to be. Within a short time, my auntie needed some money from me for food. This was quite difficult because I was not working. I had a six-month valid visa. My mum said, "if you find it very difficult, if life is not working out, just come back home, my child." My two big sisters were in London, not in Leeds. My auntie was ill-treating me. I had to sleep on the floor – I had never slept on the floor before!

I was quite fortunate; I got a job. I was working and supporting my mum and family back home. I thought it was a good thing for me to do that duty of looking after my mum. My cleaning job was in the city centre. I moved out of my auntie's place and got a bedsit in Beeston. I was there for a couple of months, then came to Chapeltown.

My mum got ill in October 2020. Her blood sugars went up and she was admitted to hospital. She was ill at the weekend but could go to hospital until Monday. I spoke to her every day on WhatsApp. I kept talking, talking, talking! On the Thursday at 8pm our last chat was, "goodnight, God bless, speak in the morning". I got a call very early the next morning. Overnight she had two strokes, very severe. On Friday she couldn't talk. On Sunday I asked my niece to put the phone on loud. I prayed for my mum. I was crying and I couldn't describe my feelings. I wanted to go home and look after my mum. But I didn't have any money. I felt I needed to go. But I didn't get chance because she died that night.

I was very fortunate because I did manage to go. My uncle in London was very generous and paid for a Covid test. It was £150! Then I needed to pay for the air fare. I was the only one who would chip in for my mum's funeral. My family all thought I had money so they wouldn't chip in. But I haven't worked since 2015 because of my health! But I believed God was on my side.

It's so difficult remembering my mum. It breaks me down. I would call her about anything. "Oh, mummy, I've met a guy from this country" or I might tell her "I don't want a relationship." I miss my mum. I have nobody to talk to, to cry to. My mum was my rock.

“Look here
Mercy, life is yours.
Think of your health”

The lockdowns are brain-damaging! I'm stuck in the house. I only go out for hospital appointments. I went for my jab. On the first day, I never felt anything. But my shoulder was swollen, and I was in pain. Shabana (from Feel Good Factor) was so supportive! She helped me! I got a lot of videos sent to me saying "don't have the vaccine". But I thought, "Look here Mercy, life is yours. Think of your health, think of ther people, go for the vaccination". So, I did. And if I want to go back to Zimbabwe, I have to have it to travel.

I'm really hoping for things to improve. Since 2002 things have gone down the drain! I don't feel the UK is the same place as before. I hope things get better.■

Mercy regularly attends workshops at Feel Good Factor and really values the activities. "I fell in love with tapestry!" she says. Thanks to Shabana for encouraging Mercy to share her story and for supporting her during a very challenging time.

Do you have a story to tell? It could be a memory, a family tale or a story of how you've coped over the last year. Send it to us at Shine:



Email - hello@shinealight.org.uk

Phone - 0113 244 1697

Post - Shine, LOPF

Joseph's Well,
Hanover Way, Leeds,
LS3 1AB.



REMEMBERING THE MINE

Did you know there used to be an open cast mine on Temple Newsam estate? We uncover the truth behind the mine and speak to people who are involved with a campaign to encourage everyone to remember the work of coal miners in Yorkshire. Photography by John Arnison

Visitors to the beautiful Temple Newsam estate may be surprised to learn that, until relatively recently, the site hosted an open cast mine. Coal has been mined on the estate since the 17th Century and in 1815 a mine shaft was sunk at Thorpe Stapleton. Waterloo Colliery was named after the famous battle of that year. Open cast mining began at Temple Newsam in 1942. The beautiful landscape, designed by Capability Brown, was destroyed. After the pits closed in the 1980s, the parkland was re-landscaped and the mines were forgotten.

That is, until a hardy bunch of ex-miners, led by community curator Helen Pratt, decided to rekindle the memory of the mine. In 2019, the group created a temporary exhibition called “Blot on the Landscape”. They continue to campaign to have the work and life of the miners permanently memorialised at the Temple Newsam site.

We caught up with Helen Pratt to ask her about the mine and the group that has formed around it.

When were you first aware of the Temple Newsam mine?

I came to Leeds when I was 16 and I remember Dennis (who is now my husband) taking me up to Seacroft. The in-place to go out at that time was the Windmill pub. I came up Bullerthorpe Lane and said, “What on earth is this?” It looked like a lunar landscape! He said, “You won’t believe it, but behind that mound of earth is a lovely country house.” That was my first encounter with Temple Newsam. The landscape was unbelievable. It had all been turned over - it wasn’t the “Capability Brown” landscape that that we know now. It was dug up from 1942 to 1983. It intrigued me, to think that they’d dug up all that landscape for coal-mining.

How did the “Blot on the Landscape” idea start?

It came from the Mining Memories exhibition at Lotherton Hall. I’d been up to the talks the miners had given as part of it. One of the miners, Bill Heselgrave, came over to me and said, “Now then, my love, I hear you’re going to do a mining exhibition for us at Temple Newsam.” I thought, yes, great idea. But I didn’t know where on earth to start! I had the miners interested. And I put an invitation out to potential research volunteers – I got about 7 or 8 responses and within that group we had an amazing range of skills from people. We’ve got an ex-prison governor, a community worker, an ex-school-teacher. One individual has learning disabilities - his father and his uncles were miners, so he had some stories. So, we had a great group and there was some kind ▶



of chemistry. They all gelled and that was it, that was the start of it. Initially it seemed leviathan - there were so many stories. We picked out certain strands and themes.

Where did the name “Blot on the Landscape” come from?

Emily Maynell-Ingram - who was one of the richest women in England – owned Temple Newsam House. She gave permission for these pit managers to lease the land and sink pits, as long as she couldn't see the pit wheels. As an old curator at the house said, mining was like a blot on the landscape - and I just said, right, that's a title.

Had the miners' story been told before?

James Lomax, our curator for 30 years, he did an exhibition called “Work and Play”. He touched briefly on the miners, but never covered them in depth. In our collections, we have very little in the way of mining artefacts. To consider that it was such a massive undertaking at Temple Newsam and there were several pits sunk! The Maynell-Ingram family got a lot of revenue from it, so to think that that story had not been told filled me with dismay. They'd made a lot of money, based on blood, sweat and tears. The house was fuelled by coal and they made money on it.

How did the miners live?

Many members of my family were miners; when I went to investigate my family history many I thought, “Gosh these people are like nomads”. They moved all over. What I realised doing this mining project was that miners had to go where the work was. So they were nomadic! When the pit closed or they got laid off, then the time came to find work elsewhere.

The miners have lots of sayings. My Dad used to say a phrase, “it's not worth a candle”. This derives from when young children were used as “trappers”; they used to allow the air into the pits, in 12-hour shifts. They used to be in pitch-black, they were never given a candle. Not even worth the light of a candle! These children were seen as worthless. The miners were tough. Conditions were far better in the 1960s than they were in the 19th Century, but still.

What astonishes me is that they look back on the life fondly! I think there was a sense of cohesion from the pit and within the streets and houses where they lived. It's quite unique. My grandfather ended up at Grimethorpe, where they filmed *Brassed Off*. There was something special about that community. They all had allotments, pigeons. There's something that connects them. They have a grimly jocular humour.

Anger was on their shoulders – death was there all the time. A sardonic humour.

How do feel, thinking that the work of the miners might be forgotten?

It saddens me. Lots of miners, especially in the old days, lived in really cramped conditions. The aristocracy made money off the backs of miners, but they didn't want to see the pit wheels. The miners had very tough lives. And that needs to be remembered.

Thanks Helen! We spoke to a few ex-miners who are part of the Blot on the Landscape project, and asked them to share their memories:

Phil Duffy worked at Temple Newsam pit when he was a young man.

When I left school, I started to work. My brother worked at Water Haigh, so I went for a job at Water Haigh. I started off as a coal miner trainee. They sent me to Whitwood Colliery, where the training galleries were. You spent 13 weeks there; a week at the pit and a week at Whitwood Training College – that for 13 weeks. When I finished my 13 weeks training, I went back to Water Haigh and I worked there for 2 or 3 weeks down the pit bottom. Then they wanted me to go as an apprentice. So, they sent me to work at Temple Newsam, as an apprentice fitter, which I did for 2 years.

For 12 months I was on the surface in the mechanics' shop and worked with the fitters and also the blacksmiths, who did the shaft work and various other things, various other jobs. There was a farrier there, who worked with the pit ponies, shoeing the pit ponies.

Tony Banks worked in lots of pits across Yorkshire. He remembers a particular disaster that happened at Lofthouse in March 1973.

*In 1957, I started working at Manor Colliery in Wakefield. I then went to Lofthouse in 1966. I was at Lofthouse during 1973, working underground on the night when the disaster happened: 7 men lost their lives. They were drowned. I was in a different seam, below the seam that flooded, about 1000 yards away. I was on nights. We were late getting to the “Paddy” in the morning (the “Paddy” was the train that took miners to the pit). All taking the mick out of each other, saying, “it's the first day of Spring tomorrow, time to plant our radishes”. We arrived at our destination off the Paddy. When we got there my team went down, the other team went up. The last thing I remember was someone shouted to me, “And don't be late in the bl**dy morning! We don't want to be late out of the*



pit!” That stuck with me. Of course, the next morning, after the disaster, it was so strange. Some of the men never came back to join us on the Paddy. Seven of them, we never saw again. It sticks in your mind.

That particular night, I was on the coal face. It was a about a yard high, the seam. I was with the machine man, he was cutting. All of a sudden there was a surge of wind: “woooof!” It sort-of knocked us off balance. I said, “What the hell was that?” I got on the tannoy to the Loader Gate Deputy. Everything went back to normal so quick. It happened so quick, as if someone had pressed a button. I said to the Deputy, “It’s strange, I’ve never known anything like it.”

At 4.20am the Loader Gate Deputy contacted Tony on the tannoy. 14 men were missing. They shut everything down and gathered the men together at the Meeting Station.

I rung the Control up and said, “we’re on our way out of the pit – is there anything you want me to hang back with some men, to help out.” Of course, his answer was, “No, get yourself out of the pit now. The rescue team are here.”

Tony got out of the pit to safety, and he reported to the Control Manager.

Time was going on by this point. I’m usually home by this time. When I got down the street, my wife, and a few more were all stood at the top of the street. It was a lovely day. They’d all heard on the news about this disaster. They were all worried. I got home and went to bed about 9am. But I couldn’t sleep. All you do is think about them men, Anyway, we struggled, but we

never got them out. Six of them are still there today. After that, Lofthouse was never the same again.

Bill Heszgrave worked in many collieries for over 40 years, and still remains positive about mining.

I started work in 1954. I finished school on Good Friday and I started work at Peckfield Colliery in Mickfield on the Tuesday. I worked there till 1960 when I got married. I moved to Primrose Hill Colliery in Swillington. Then on to Acton Hall, Ledston Luck, Bolt Colliery in Lancashire. In 1974 I went to Welldale, then to Kingsley Drifts and then to Gascoyne Wood.

I did every job in mining. I was in the pit bottom when I first started. Moving on to pony driving, haulage work. All different jobs on the face. All the jobs you could do in coal mining. I did 44 years down the mines and if I had my time again, I’d do exactly the same. I thought it was the best job you could ever have. All the miners’ camaraderie was fantastic. All your friends, you could trust your life to them. To your mate next to you. In the day or night, whatever shift you were on, you always knew you were safe. I remember going to work every day and just enjoying it. Some good memories, some bad memories.

I had a few lucky escapes. At Peckfield Colliery, I was on haulage. I’ve been sent down this morning, to bring the tubs up that had been stored from the previous shift. I was pulling them up, and unbeknownst to me there’d been about 60 tubs fastened together, where normally they’d be in blocks of 20. The rope reared up and came off the tubs and knocked me to the floor. The rope was running over my stomach. Luckily, there was a lad who’d been late for work, he was walking by. He stopped the rope. Another older man, he was walking in. Well, they managed to lift the rope off me. If not, I’m afraid I’d have been cut in half that morning. That would have been the end of poor old Bill! It was dangerous, don’t get me wrong. But you got used to it. You had your mates to back you up.■

Thanks Helen, Tony and Bill.

The Blot on the Landscape project is planning an exhibition – ‘Eye of the Miner’ is coming this summer. And they continue their campaign to have a permanent memorial to the miners at Temple Newsam.

These recent photos of the ex-miners are by John Arnison and will be on display at an upcoming exhibition at Lotherton Hall very soon.

MONEY MATTERS



A boost to your income could make you feel better. Claim your Pension Credits now and you could improve your health. You could be entitled to an extra £60 every week! Find out more about how to apply below.

Health isn't just about infections, vaccines and going to hospital. Our health is dependent on a huge number of factors. One of the big indications of how healthy you are is how much money you have. According to the Office for National Statistics, there is a "healthy life-expectancy gap" of around 19 years between the most and least deprived areas of the UK. This means people with more money are likely to live longer and be healthier.

There is a campaign in Leeds to help older people understand that they might be entitled to claim particular benefits. The hope is that if people get

more money, they'll be able to live healthier lives. The campaign is particularly focused on Pension Credits. This is money you can get from the government to "top up" your weekly income. Apparently, there's around £32 million that isn't currently being claimed in Leeds. It's time you got your chunk of that £32 million! Over the page Jo Volpe from the Centre for Ageing Better explains how you can claim your Pension Credits. But first, we speak to an older person who has already done so about the impact it has had on their life. It isn't always easy to navigate the benefits system but once you do, it can have a hugely positive effect on your finances – and your health.

Mary is 92 and lives in the Richmond Hill area. Recently workers at Richmond Hill Elderly Action (RHEA) helped Mary work out her benefits and claim pension credit and Housing Benefit. Donna Waldron, SWIFt Engagement Officer at RHEA, spoke to Mary initially. “Mary had told me she had been living off the funds from selling her house and it had nearly run out,” says Donna. “She feared she would have to move as wouldn't be able to afford the rent.”

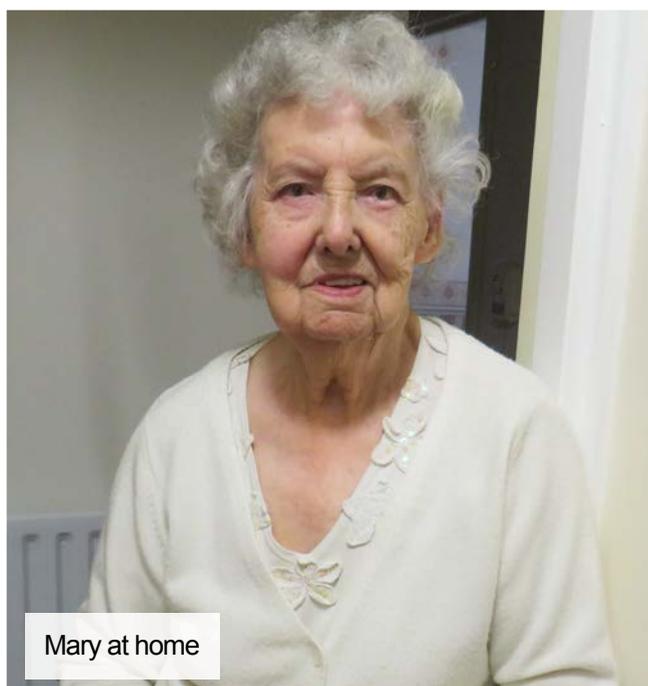
Confidentiality

Donna asked Nicola Farley, Outreach Worker at RHEA to help out. Donna says, “If you or someone you know has a problem or needs advice on any subject, RHEA's expert Nicola will work with them on a one-to-one basis and in complete confidentiality.” Nicola helped Mary work out the benefits she was entitled to. Mary was able to claim both Pension Credit and Housing Benefit.

Thanks to Nicola and Donna and their help, Mary was able to stay where she loves and increase her weekly income.

We caught up with Mary on the phone to find out a little more about her and why claiming Pension Credit was a good idea. Mary started by telling us about where she grew up. “I was born in Leeds, where the Merrion Centre is. They knocked our houses down to build the Merrion Centre. Rossington Street, they called it. At one end it was Woodhouse Lane and at the top end it was Camp Road.”

During World War 2, Mary worked as a machinist in



Mary at home

a factory on Claypit Lane, making army uniforms. She stopped work when she got married, though sadly her first husband died. Mary married again and they started a family.

Day-to-day living

As she got older, Mary realised that she needed some help with day-to-day living, so she moved to a sheltered housing complex. She sold her house. “I should have asked more for it really,” she tells us. “I just wanted to get out of the area.” When her funds were getting low, Mary thought she might have to move out. Nicola helped her navigate the benefits system. “I've just had a rise in my benefits,” says Mary. “I'm better off now.” Mary is entitled to Housing Benefit, which helps her pay her rent. She's also entitled to Pension Credits, which means she has more money to spend on other day-to-day things.

It's fantastic to hear that Mary was able to get her benefits sorted out. She really loves where she lives and having Housing Benefit meant she could stay there. “It's lovely. The wardens are very, very good. The people that live here, I'm friendly with a lot of them. I do like it here. It's a one-bedroomed flat. It's only two storeys high and I'm on the top floor.” Mary's Pension Credits also help with bills like groceries. Her family take her shopping and Mary enjoys having just a bit more money to spend. Finally, we asked Mary what advice she'd give to older people who might be entitled to Pension Credits. “Get them sorted out!” she says. Who can argue with that?

The average Pension Credit claim boosts your income by around £60 a week. Just imagine...

Setting the central heating to come on in the morning so you wake up warm

Getting a taxi to the supermarket once a week

Buying fresh, healthy food more often

Signing up for a fitness class at the local gym

ISN'T IT TIME YOU

Topped up?



PENSION Top Up

It's been estimated that around £32 million in pension credit is going unclaimed in Leeds. Some of that £32m could be yours!

The average value of a household's pension credit claim in Leeds is £59.50 per week. Imagine what a difference that could make to your life - having to worry less about money and being able to afford the things you need. It can make the difference between being able to pay for food, heat a home and use public and private transport. The first type of pension credit is called Guarantee Credit.

You can get Guarantee Credit if your weekly income is less than £177.10 if you're single, or £270.30 if you're a couple. It kicks in when you reach State Pension age. If your weekly income drops below those figures at any time after this, you can claim. Some carers and disabled people may be entitled to extra amounts.

BUT WHAT IF I have savings

You can still claim! There is no capital limit for Pension Credit though savings over £10,000 can affect the amount of Pension Credit you are entitled to. The second type of Pensions Credit is called Savings Credit. Savings Credit is extra money if you've got some savings or your income is higher than the basic State Pension. It's only available to people who reached State Pension age before 6 April 2016. You could get up to:

- £13.97 extra per week if you're single
- or £15.62 if you're a couple

Pension Credits are available to many older people in Leeds. But how do you go about getting hold of that extra money? **Jo Volpe** from the Centre for Ageing Better explains the process below.

WHAT ELSE can I get?

Getting Pension Credit is not just the weekly payment, it can entitle you to all this:

- A free TV Licence if you're over 75.
- Free NHS dental treatment, help towards buying glasses and the cost of travel to hospital.
- A warm home discount (worth £140 a year) and a cold weather payment worth £25 when the temperature is 0°C or below for 7 days in a row.
- Housing Benefit or help with mortgage interest, ground rent and service charges.
- Help towards council tax.
- If you're a carer you may get an extra amount.

A QUICK phone call

You can apply online or by phone call to the Pension Credit claim line. A friend or family member can call for you if you cannot use the phone.

Pension Credit claim line: 0800 99 1234

If you haven't got anyone who can help you with the call Welfare Rights at Leeds City Council would be happy to help, please call them on 0113 3760452.

Age UK Leeds have people who can help with your claim.

Please call them on
0113 389 3000 or 0113 389 3010

You will need:

- your National Insurance number
- information about your income, savings and investments
- your bank account details, if you're applying by phone or by post

What would you spend your extra money on?

Sudoku

The goal of Sudoku is to fill in a 9x9 grid with digits so that each column, row, and 3x3 section contain the numbers between 1 to 9. At the beginning of the game, the 9x9 grid will have some of the squares filled in.

	5							
			5			3	6	2
				7	9			
8	4			3		2		
9		2		4	1		5	
1	7	3	2			8		
	1		4	6	3		7	
	3		1		7	9	2	4
4	8				2	6	3	1

Wordsearch - Flowers in the garden

J	A	B	H	Z	L	N	M	Z	A	E	X	D
S	N	O	I	T	A	N	R	A	C	D	R	P
S	R	E	W	O	L	F	N	U	S	L	S	I
P	D	A	F	F	O	D	I	L	E	O	A	S
I	V	Y	I	N	A	Y	S	G	I	G	I	E
L	P	P	E	O	N	I	E	S	O	I	L	I
U	D	A	I	S	I	E	S	W	C	R	H	L
T	O	O	D	W	S	T	O	M	Z	A	A	I
O	R	C	H	I	D	S	R	A	E	M	D	L
U	E	L	F	P	P	D	T	B	T	O	Z	B
M	B	G	G	C	O	P	I	D	N	V	H	R

Carnations Daffodil Dahlias Daisies Lilies
 Marigold Orchids Peonies
 Roses Sunflowers Tulips

This month's puzzle page is brought to you by Home Instead Senior Care. You can find all the answers on the bottom of page 35.



Gardening Quiz

1. The love apple is the original name for what?
2. How can you tell the age of a tree?
3. Which plant takes its name from the Italian phrase for beautiful women?
4. What is the art of cutting shrubs into ornamental shapes called?
5. Often called England's greatest gardener, what is Capability Brown's given first name?
6. The spice, saffron, comes from which flower?
7. Where is the biggest tree in the world, giant sequoia, found?
8. What fruit hit, or more likely fell, near Isaac Newton and helped him develop the law of gravity?
9. What vitamin is most prevalent in a lime?
10. In what season should you plant daffodil bulbs?
11. What is the alternative name for the aubergine?
12. What is another more common name for an Alligator Pear?



Word Wheel

Your target is to create as many words of four letters or more, using the letters once only and always including the letter in the middle of the wheel.

Personal care

Home help

Dementia care

Live-in care

The best home to be in is **your own**

Maintaining independence and quality of life is key to ageing well.

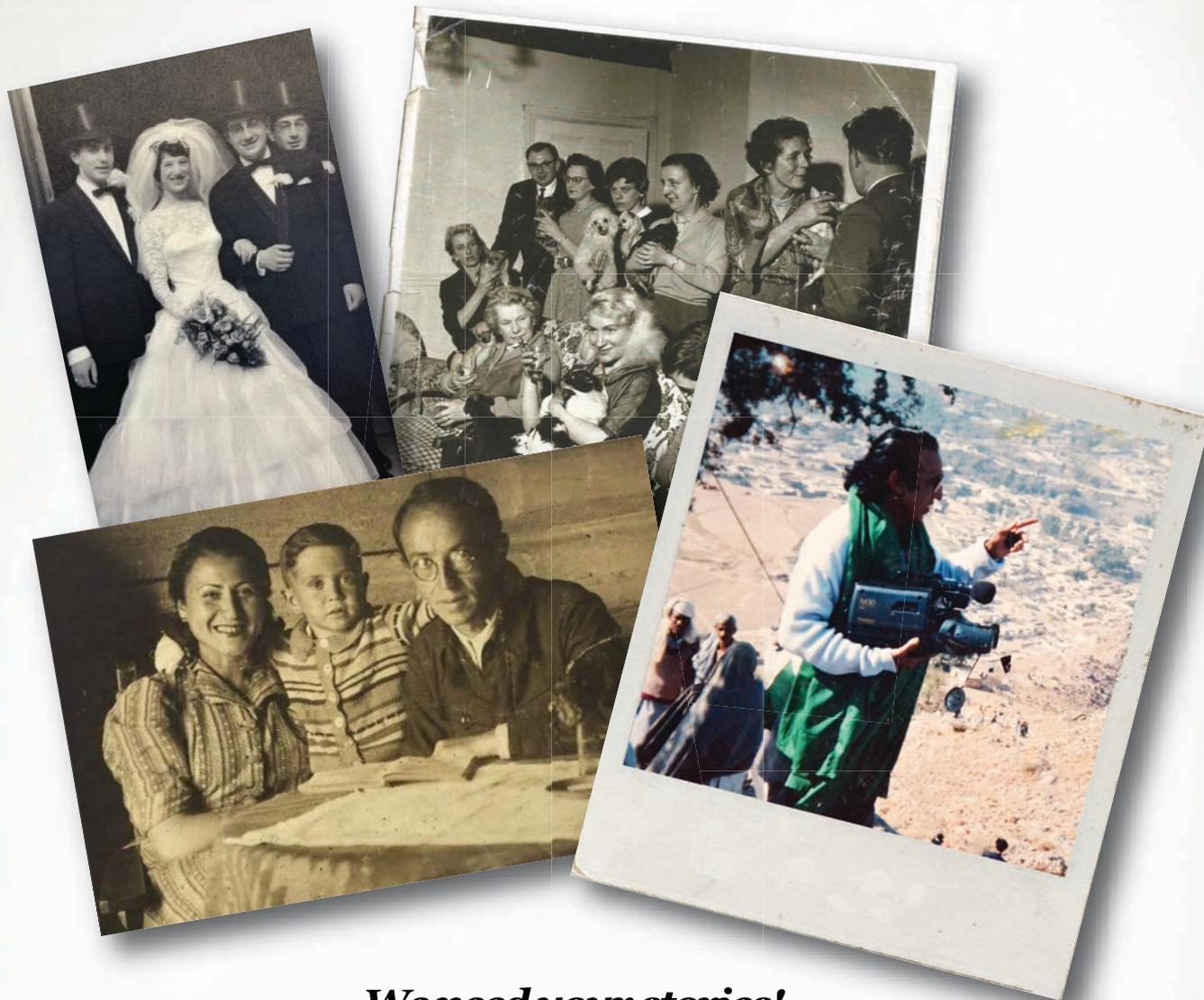
Home Instead provides high quality, personalised care in your own home



Covering Wetherby and Leeds, please call our specialists on **01937 220510**
 or visit **www.homeinstead.co.uk/Wetherby**

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Do you have a story to tell?



We need your stories!

We're looking for interesting true stories about older people in Leeds. We want to shine a light on some of Leeds' most interesting people. Your story could be funny, dramatic, moving or quirky. It could be a story from a long time ago or from the past year. This is your chance to tell your story about your life. It could be ordinary, it could be extraordinary – every story is special.

How to share your story

- Contact us with the theme of your story. Sum it up in a couple of sentences.
- Make sure you tell us the best way to contact you.
- We'll be in touch to work out the best way for you to tell the story. You could write it yourself or talk to us over the phone and one of our writers will write it for you. We'll also ask you to send us some photos.

Contact us:

Phone: 0113 244 1697

Email: hello@shinealight.org.uk

Post: Shine Magazine, Leeds Older People's Forum, Joseph's Well, Hanover Way, Leeds, LS3 1AB

Shine

Leeds Older People's Forum:

0113 244 1697

LOPF can direct you to Neighbourhood Networks and older people's services in your area.

Leeds Coronavirus Hotline

0113 376 0330

For anyone unable to leave their home because of coronavirus, and worried because they don't have family or friends who can help.

Universal Credit Hotline:

0800 328 9559

Dementia Connect:

0333 150 3456

Alzheimer's Society's new personalised support service for people with dementia and their carers.

Covid-19 Bereavement Support Line:

0113 218 5544 or 0113 203 3369

For anyone who has a friend or family member who is seriously ill or who has died from Covid-19.

Leeds Directory:

0113 378 4610

Leeds City Council's Information Service that offers a range of local community care and support services and activities.

NHS:

111

For all non-urgent medical care

NHS number

119

This is the new number for Covid related calls -if you have Covid symptoms, want a test or are over 70 and not yet had your vaccine.

The Carers Advice Line for Leeds

0113 380 4300

If people are one of the 74,000 unpaid carers in Leeds and need some advice, help or support

100% Digital

0113 535 1170

Help with digital stuff or help to just get online

Leeds Gay Community (LGC):

Men's group. lgc@mesmac.co.uk

Sage:

sage@mesmac.co.uk

Group for 50+ year old LGBT+ people

Friends of Dorothy:

info@friendsofdorothy.org.uk

Group for 50+ year old LGBT+ people

Leeds LGBT+ Women's Space:

lgbtwomensspace@gmail.com

Group for LGBT+ women aged 40 years or older.

Silver Pride Social:

A new WhatsApp social 'chat' group with a fast-growing membership of 50+ year old LGBT+ people.

Quiz corner solutions

3	5	4	6	2	8	1	9	7
7	9	8	5	1	4	3	6	2
6	2	1	3	7	9	4	8	5
8	4	5	7	3	6	2	1	9
9	6	2	8	4	1	7	5	3
1	7	3	2	9	5	8	4	6
2	1	9	4	6	3	5	7	8
5	3	6	1	8	7	9	2	4
4	8	7	9	5	2	6	3	1

J	A	B	H	Z	L	N	M	Z	A	E	X	D
S	N	O	I	T	A	N	R	A	C	D	R	P
S	R	E	W	O	L	F	N	U	S	L	S	I
P	D	A	F	F	O	D	I	L	E	O	A	S
I	V	Y	I	N	A	Y	S	G	I	G	I	E
L	P	P	E	O	N	I	E	S	O	I	L	I
U	D	A	I	S	I	E	S	W	C	R	H	L
T	O	O	D	W	S	T	O	M	Z	A	A	I
O	R	C	H	I	D	S	R	A	E	M	D	L
U	E	L	F	P	P	D	T	B	T	O	Z	B
M	B	G	G	C	O	P	I	D	N	V	H	R

Word wheel

4 Letters ACHE ACNE CAGE CAVE CHAI
CHIA CHIN CINE EACH INCH NICE VICE

5 Letters ACING CHAIN CHINA CHINE
CHING CHIVE ICING NICHE

6 Letters ACHING CAVING CHANGE

9 Letters ACHIEVING

Gardening Quiz

1. Tomato
2. Count the rings
3. Belladonna
4. Topiary
5. Lancelot
6. Crocus
7. California
8. Apple
9. Vitamin C
10. Autumn
11. Eggplant (or Solanum melongena)
12. Avocado



If you or your family need help, the NHS is here for you.

GP surgeries, pharmacies, dental practices, opticians and other NHS services have made changes to the way you access their care to make it safer for you.

Don't delay, contact us to get the care you need.

#hello my name is...
Adebola Adisa
GP

**HELP US
HELP YOU**

GET THE CARE YOU NEED

www.nhs.uk