



## MUSCLE BEACH COMES TO KENSAL GREEN

In 2022, University of Michigan published new research that found weak muscles could be just as harmful to one's long-term health as smoking. Ageing is a process involving more than just birthdays and wrinkles, and can be influenced by lifestyle choices such as exercise and diet. Take two adults both aged 70; they might share the same chronological age but based on their lifestyle they could in fact have a different biological age. For example, if one adult smokes, drinks heavily and does no exercise, they may have a biological age of 80. If the other adult leads a healthy and active lifestyle, they may have a biological age of 60. That's a 20 year difference between them, despite being born in the same year. Simply put, an individual's body may be ageing at a faster rate than their birthday suggests. University of Michigan have been able to confirm

for the first time ever, that muscle weakness (marked by grip strength) is connected with accelerated biological age. According to their findings, the weaker your grip strength, the older your biological age. The good news is you can reverse your biological age and prevent it from accelerating!

Armed with this new discovery, we applied to Wembley National Stadium Trust for a grant to purchase weightlifting and resistance training equipment. We are pleased to say our application was successful and we have been awarded the funds to adapt part of our Wellbeing Centre to become an accessible gym for older adults. We want our new gym to be a welcoming and approachable environment. The weightlifting areas in commercial gyms can be intimidating; often commandeered by muscle bound men, and the equipment confusing to

use! So we will recruit a qualified personal trainer, who will work one-to-one with older adults and create personalised training programmes for them. The trainer will show participants how to work safely with weights, maintain core strength and build muscle density. In addition to one-to-one training, we will run group sessions, so gym members can meet new people and socialise. After all, what use is a younger biological age if we spend our latter years feeling lonely? Longevity is something to aim for, but quality of life is perhaps more important. And to supercharge our feel-good hormones, we may even take weightlifting to the park!

If you are interested in signing-up for one-to-one training or attending a group session, please contact the Wellbeing Centre on: 0208 206 7503 or email: [info@eldersvoice.org.uk](mailto:info@eldersvoice.org.uk).

## STRIKE A POSE

In April, members of the Day Centre spent a day learning how to use camera phones, instant film cameras, selfie sticks, tripods and ring lights. In preparation they made their own photo backdrops using salvaged wallpaper, magazine cuttings, bright fabrics and fairy lights. Members seemed to get a kick out of instructing each other on where to stand and how to pose. The instant film camera made us nostalgic for the seventies

when Polaroids were all the rage (which was rather apt as this decade is often referred to as the "Me" decade and we were taking selfies). One client living with dementia asked for two copies of his selfie; one for his wife and one for his girlfriend! Despite being great fun, the photography session did make us realise how fiddly and unintuitive gadgets can be. Buttons were stiff to press or hard to find, viewfinders were impossibly small and selfie sticks were difficult to hold

in the air for long, with the weight of a camera on the end. Some were being wielded about like swords. But we refuse to let things like memory loss or mobility problems stand in the way of our members trying their hand at something new, or something they haven't had the chance to do in a while. In May, they were sampling baklava and drinking fresh mint tea at the Lebanese place round the corner, and today they are off to Regents Park for some forest bathing.

# HOW DO WE LIVE WELL?

Scott Bartle, Clinical Psychologist & Members of the Elders Voice Dementia Café 2018-2020



In 2020, Clinical Psychologist Scott Bartle, and members of the Elders Voice Memory Café, worked on a piece of research together around the lived experiences of people affected by dementia. Based on their findings, they wrote an open letter and shared it with the council, assembly, government, NHS, charities and local newspaper. We are pleased to be able to share this letter with you now and an update from Scott on the responses received.

## Open Letter

### We are

People affected by dementia and Alzheimer's; with it or with those we care for and love, and we all live within Brent. Imagine us, as we could one day be you.

### We feel

Forgotten, pushed aside, and placed on the scrap heap. We don't see that society or government cares about us.

### We see

How you consider dementia and Alzheimer's as a joke illness. You laugh if you forget something silly and say "Ha ha, I've got Alzheimer's". But if you have stomach pains, you don't laugh and say "Ha ha, I've got cancer".

### This means

As dementia or Alzheimer's begins and you can't remember things and forget people's names. Or you forget what's just been said and start to say the same things again. You might close your eyes to it and pretend that nothing's wrong, as you're not taking it seriously. We may all laugh it off, but we shouldn't.

## Which leads to an issue

If you had a physical illness you would go to the doctor straight away, but when it's something like this you are very reluctant to admit it. It takes such a long time to get a diagnosis and this is an additional delay to getting the right help.

This hurts us because of what we know. It's a strange illness as it affects everyone differently, dependent upon your personality. But as your memory goes, it hurts, as there's nothing there, you are a shell of your former self. Your family, friends, grandchildren can come up to you and you might not even know them.

## What we need you to know

### The NHS

Some of us have waited up to eight years for assessment and support: visiting the GP for four years and the memory clinic for another four years before diagnosis. We wonder if this



time lost was spent on treatments, memories may have been saved.

- We want quicker access to assessment and treatment.

Once you've been diagnosed, it is like you have "Alzheimer's goodbye". They seem to think "Oh well you have it, bye bye".

- Where is the follow-up or aftercare?

We are left wondering "How do we live now, and how do we live well?" Some of us might not have the internet, and some of us might live alone without support from others.



- We think there should be a register. For the GP to tell the council, so social care already know about us. For the GP to let other services know who might help us with support.

Our GPs have told us that they need more training on dementia and Alzheimer's.

- We ask if this can be provided, so our GPs have up-to-date information.

### The Council

It takes so much time for us to find out what help to get, and from where. We don't know about you and you certainly don't know about us.

- Find out about us, telephone us, or knock on our door.
- Say "Hello we're social care, how can we help?" and ask what we need.
- Make it easier for us to find out about home care and equipment.

You make promises, like adaptations to homes, which you cannot keep. If someone can't get in or out of their home, and you've said you'll provide a ramp, it's not right that we're waiting over a year for that to happen. Everyone seems to be dragging their feet, when time is not what we've always got.

- Recognise who is a priority and get the surveyor down there quick to see what needs to be done, then bring the builders down to do the job.

Dementia is a depressing illness, and



we worry about those left home alone. We're interested in things to stimulate us and keep our minds active. We've made friends at the dementia cafes, and enjoy activities and events.



Museum visit, Kingsbury Memory Café

- Cafés or clubs should be funded to be open for more days and longer.
- We want you to let everyone know what's available across Brent.
- Why can't you put this information for us in your Brent magazine?

### Scientists and Research

We don't hear anything from the large dementia or Alzheimer's charities. We question if a focus on the cure and how to live well with dementia, is forgotten.

- We want more of a focus on living well with dementia.
- We want to hear more from you, about what you're doing.

We're told how to look after our bodies, to exercise and eat well. We're never told how to look after our most important organ, the brain.

- We'd like more research on how we feed or nourish our brains.

We value the help of our doctors, but sometimes they say "Let's try this medication or that medication" and seem to be working from best guess.

- We're not guinea pigs, we want more confidence in medications.

### Politicians and Government

If it wasn't for coronavirus, we would want to see every man, woman and child protesting at 10 Downing Street. You should be doing more to help us.

- We do not accept being forgotten.

- We want more resources or funding for our health and research science.

These are our demands. Does anybody care?

### Update from Scott

Just before the pandemic in 2020, an invitation was kindly accepted by Lynn Burling, Wellbeing Manager and the Elders Voice Dementia Café, to explore if the attendees would be interested in creating a piece of research as my co-researchers. As a psychologist who lives locally, with a family member who had a diagnosis of dementia, I thought I could share my skills as a researcher with the attendees, to help their voices be heard by the people who make decisions that affect them locally.

This was because surprisingly to me, not much research is completed with people who are affected by dementia, be that the person or their families. This was because traditional research was led by 'experts' following their own interests, rather than led by people directly affected by an issue.



Baking, Kensal Green Memory Café

Unfortunately the research world is set in its ways, which meant that I was not able to contact Lynn or the co-researchers directly to tell them what happened. This is because when you have permission to carry out research as part of a university, the ethical rules meant I was not able to directly contact the people involved afterwards. I was surprised by this but I was allowed to share what happened in this newsletter.

Co-researchers shared their experiences of dementia as people, how it affected their relationships with others and how societal issues

affected them. The pandemic limited what we could do, so the group wrote an open letter and shared it with the council, assembly, government, NHS, charities and local newspaper. There was a mixture of responders and non-responders. Although directly elected politicians did not respond, the council and local assembly demonstrated they heard the co-researchers and pledged to make some changes. The council promised to change how it lets people know about what it does and said they were trying to make changes on issues raised as part of their strategy. The Chair of the London Assembly Health Committee offered a commitment to ensure that people affected by dementia were "at the forefront" of future dementia policies and he pledged to approach people affected by dementia in advance of any future work they do.

For a definitive list of memory cafés and dementia services in Brent, please contact the [Ashford Place Dementia Hub](#) on: 0208 208 8590 or email: [info@ashfordplace.org.uk](mailto:info@ashfordplace.org.uk). To book a memory assessment please contact [Brent Memory Services](#) on: 020 8206 3950 or email: [brentmemoryservice.cnlw@nhs.net](mailto:brentmemoryservice.cnlw@nhs.net).

### TENNIS FOR ALL

If you are a fan of tennis but would prefer a gentler pace of play, Vale Farm Sports Centre are offering Walking Tennis sessions for just £4, on Tuesdays at 10am-11am. Walking Tennis is a safe, inclusive and fun way to play tennis, and a great way to stay active. Vale Farm Sports Centre offer other social and active sessions for over-50s, including badminton, table tennis and pickleball, costing no more than £5. To book a session you can call the Centre on: 020 8908 6545 or visit: [www.everyoneactive.com](http://www.everyoneactive.com)



# GENERATIONS TOGETHER

Caroline D'Souza, Founder, LEAP London and Jon Cuming-Higgs, CEO, Elders Voice

LEAP was delighted to be asked to partner with Elders Voice to co-deliver the Generations Together project, and the experience so far has given everyone involved a real sense of what it's like to go through a co-design process.

The first phase of the project involved children from Princess Frederica Primary School (aged 10-11), joining a group of older adults at Elders Voice, for weekly workshops. The aim of the workshops was for the co-designers to come up with an idea for an intergenerational community space. This could literally be anything, and the group began with a completely blank space.

Generations are often kept apart in our society and therefore don't get the chance to get to know one and other. It is assumed that a difference in age prevents them having common ground or a way to relate to each other. This certainly was not the case with our group! The co-designers gelled together very well, and our sessions were energetic, humorous and good fun. Both generations gained a lot from each other throughout the process.

"Generations Together project was a very enjoyable experience because we got to meet new people, make friends with them and also play games together." - Yasmina, Year 6 pupil

"Seeing the children and older people find common ground was one of my favourite parts of the experience. We discovered that, despite our superficial differences, we are more alike than we first thought!" - Anna, Teacher

"I would like to congratulate the parents and the school for the way the children behaved. They were lovely. I was surprised how considerate they were about the needs of the elderly." - Viveen, older participant

Through a series of creative, thought provoking and reflective activities, our group began.

## Hands Head Heart

In the early weeks it was about preparation and getting to know each other. What are our likes and dislikes, what are we good at? Using a large, sticky wall, the process was visual and playful. What are the gifts that we bring to the group? We all have something to contribute, a skill or talent. We grouped these skills under the headings: 'Hands', 'Head' and 'Heart'. Identifying what skills we could contribute was an essential part of the process. Are we good at something practical ('hands')? Are we more of a thinker or organiser ('head')? Or did we bring an emotive element, a people orientated aspect to the proceedings ('heart')? The point was that we needed all these elements in our design process and therefore everyone's contribution was valued.



## Ideas Generation

Our intergenerational group had become a design team. One rule we followed from the start was 'no idea is a bad idea'. Using a multitude of Post-it notes, it was quantity over quality at this point. We had ideas coming out of our ears! We wrote down the activities and experiences we enjoyed. Some examples that featured a lot were a football match, drawing comics, people watching, scary rides, computer games, being in nature, the sun, travel, the beach and favourite food. Using our senses helped us to drill down further into these ideas, to help us pinpoint what aspect of them we really loved and why. It was the atmosphere and the shared experience in the football stadium, the shared experience of eating, the excitement and live aspect of scary rides. It was about discovering new things and new food when travelling.

It was soon clear that the following three aspects must be present in any ideas that we came up with: atmosphere, shared experience and discovery.



## Storytelling

The ability to tell a story is a useful tool when taking part in a co-design project. Through some lively story telling games, we learnt how to expand our ideas further by improvising and adding detail. But of course we reached the stage when we had to hone down our ideas, and this is where the 'dotmocracy' came in! Using sticky dots to vote, everyone chose their three favourite ideas. The three ideas that received the most votes were:

- A mixed age art group that visits galleries, and recreates art from different periods in history through art and drama.
- A series of creative workshops designed by children and older adults that culminates in an arts festival.
- An after school club that thinks it's



a restaurant, where different generations cook and dine together.

### Personas

Having previously worked in intergenerational groups, we now worked in our own age groups and created personas for imagined older and younger people. What were their personalities like, their families, cultures, hobbies? Did they have support needs? These personas were always there in the background (on the sticky wall), reminding us to take their needs into account!



### The Pop-up Café

Our three intergenerational groups worked hard on turning their ideas into a presentation. The big day came when it was time to pitch their ideas to the local community in return for tea and cake. We were delighted to welcome a great crowd at our Generations Together Pop-up Café. In attendance were members and services users of Elders Voice, Andrew Davies, Head of Commissioning and Lynette Gbedze, Services Manager for Adult Social Care at Brent Council, local Queens Park Councillor Stephen Crabb, and Nicola Christopher, Head of School, Princess Frederica. As our guests settled in and soaked up the atmosphere of the pop-up café, the three intergenerational groups moved around the room like a carousel, presenting their ideas to each table.

The children took the lead on the pitches, with the older people supporting, motivating and encouraging them. They pitched their ideas verbally and used story boards and posters to further illustrate their ideas. The guests were encouraged to ask the design teams questions and give feedback on the groups' ideas. There were lots of questions that cropped up, specifically about budget, advertising, venues and transport, but luckily our groups had begun to think about these essential aspects and gave considered answers. When the voting sheets were collected from the tables, and the votes were all counted and verified, the winners were announced. 'An Afterschool Club That Thinks Its A Restaurant' was the idea that received the most votes. Jon, who compèred the event, reminded us all that this was not just an academic exercise; the winning idea would be brought to life, and our Generations Together design team would be meeting again to make the after school club a reality. Our group will be graduating from co-designers to co-creators!

"Working with these young children was so stimulating! Their ideas and enthusiasm were great - I cannot wait to eat the results of the after school club." - Chris, older participant

"You could see that a lot of time and thought had been put into the ideas. The majority of us chose the after school club restaurant idea. This sounds like a fantastic idea where children and the older generation get together to cook and share a different cuisine each week. I look forward to being invited again and maybe sampling some culinary delights!" - Nicola, Head of School, Princess Frederica

"I really liked the LEAP project because it was lovely to interact with people from a different generation and learn lots about their way of life." - Estela, Year 6 pupil

### Project Insights

All the designers involved brought so much energy, talent and commitment,

it made the co-design stage a massive success. **We saw an easy interplay between the designers.** Some brought specific talents to the process however, these skills were given freely. No one tried to dominate or dictate the direction of travel. The designers enjoyed working together; feeding off each other's ideas. The final concept has a little bit of everyone in it, even the quietist of voices.

**There were no barriers to participation.** If an individual found an activity challenging, their peers would support them and advocate on their behalf. Everyone felt involved and that they had contributed something. Some of the designers even became part of an informal group huddle who, after each session, reflected on how things had progressed. These reflections really helped inform the development of future sessions.

**Everyone was learning.** There was no 'teaching' happening. The designers were sharing their knowledge and experiences. Jon and Caroline, the teaching assistants and teachers, and all the people helping facilitate the sessions; none of us were exempt from being part of a learning process.

This project is proving that intergenerational groups can work together on serious design projects, where they dictate the direction, the development and delivery of their own ideas, in successful and innovative ways. Intergenerational co-design teams could be the answer to ending age-segregation in the UK.

Find out more about LEAP here:

<https://www.leaplondon.co.uk/>

and for project updates follow Caroline here:

<https://twitter.com/carolinedsouza6>



# WRITING A WILL - DON'T PUT IT OFF

Elders Voice Trustee, Nada Savitch, talks about why she has made a Will and why she would encourage everyone else to do so.



We all know that the only certainties in life are death and taxes. But we all find it really difficult to talk about our own passing, and planning for the inevitable can seem strange. I found loads of reasons to put off writing a Will:

- People will think I'm only interested in money.
- I can't upset my nearest and dearest by talking about my death.
- What's the point? It will all go to my loved ones automatically.

But then I began to hear stories of what happens if you don't make a Will (die intestate), and I considered all the reasons why making a Will is a good idea.

## Make sure your wishes are known

The most obvious reason I found to make a Will is to make sure my money and possessions will go to the people I want them to. I realised that if I died without making a Will my money would be divided up according to a set of intestacy rules - and this was not what I wanted.

## Make things easier for your friends and relations

We all know that when someone dies the paperwork and arrangements that need to be made can be overwhelming. For me, reducing the stress on my loved ones at a very emotional time was important. Dying without a Will can make everything much more complicated. It is often a struggle to sell property and deal with banks, utilities etc if you die intestate.

## A Will can include:

- Requests about your funeral arrangements,

- Any gifts you want to make to charity,
- Information about how to access any digital possessions (including photographs), and
- Your wishes for your pets.

All-in-all I decided that having my wishes clearly laid out will avoid arguments when I'm not there.

## Everyone is different

Everyone's situation is different. Families are much more complicated than they used to be. In my case, I'm not married to my partner. The law doesn't necessarily recognise our relationship and the house is in my name. If I died without a Will, my partner might find himself homeless. I've heard of other nightmare scenarios.

- "My father remarried and died without making a Will - I've found out I inherit nothing, surely that's not what he wanted."
- "My wife's children have inherited part of the house and they want their money now so they want me to move out."
- "My mother died before her divorce was final and now her ex-husband is claiming the house."
- "My husband died without a will - now a large part of his estate has to be divided between me and our children. We are left with a massive Inheritance Tax bill that we weren't expecting."
- "My husband raised my daughter as his own from when she was a baby, but now he has died without a Will all his money will be divided between me and the son he never saw. My daughter gets nothing."

These examples show that if your situation is not straight forward in any way, it's vital to make a Will to avoid complications and heartache.

## Steps for making a Will:

- Work out what you own and what you owe.
- Decide what you want to happen to your assets when you die: who

gets what. (It's also an opportunity to try to reduce inheritance tax if your estate is large enough to be liable.)

- Talk to at least two people who you think will be able sort out your Will (the executors) when you die. It could be your family, friends, or a professional like a solicitor or accountant.
- Write your Will and give a copy to your executors along with a list of your money, property, and possessions. (You must use certain wording to make the Will legal and valid, so it's often worth paying a solicitor to help you. A badly drafted Will can cause more problems than no Will at all.)
- Review and update your Will every five years and whenever your circumstances change. (As an old Will may not include your current wishes.)

More info about Wills at Age UK: [bit.ly/42D3c83](https://bit.ly/42D3c83) / Free Will writing in October 2023: [freewillsmoth.org.uk](https://freewillsmoth.org.uk)

## FREE TAX HELP FOR OLDER PEOPLE



If you are struggling to understand a letter or form from HMRC, or are worried about tax, you can get support from [Tax Help for Older People](https://www.taxhelpforolderpeople.org.uk). This is a charity service providing free, independent and expert advice for older people based in the UK, on lower incomes who cannot afford to pay for professional tax advice. They will even talk to HMRC on your behalf. To be eligible for this service you need to be over the age of 60 and have less than £20,000 in savings. To find out more call: 01308 488066 or email: [taxvol@taxvol.org.uk](mailto:taxvol@taxvol.org.uk). To learn more about how pensions are taxed, visit: <https://bit.ly/3Caqs2s>



## BACK TO MOVEMENT

Thank you to Track Academy's [Back to Movement](#) fund, for awarding us a grant to extend our much loved Zumba Gold and Chair Yoga classes. Back to Movement is an initiative designed to increase the activity levels of residents across Brent. During the pandemic people had less opportunity to exercise and as a result of this saw a decline in their physical and mental

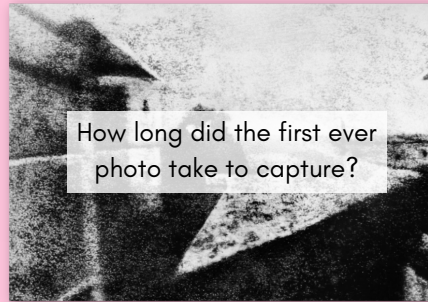
health. Older people in particular reported a decline in their mobility and emotional wellbeing, so we are delighted to be able to provide opportunities for them to reconnect, get fit and build hope for the future. If you are interested in attending our Zumba Gold or Chair Yoga class, please call: 0208 206 7503 or email: [info@eldersvoice.org.uk](mailto:info@eldersvoice.org.uk).

## TRIVIAL PURSUITS

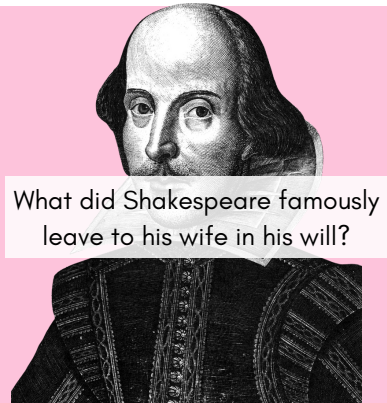
1.



2.



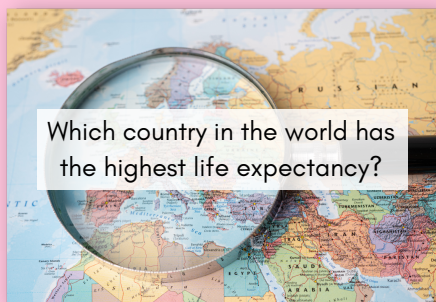
3.



4.



5.



6.



**Answers:** 1. Muscle Beach started in 1934 with predominantly gymnastics activities. 2. The first photo taken by a camera took at least 8 hours but possibly as long as 2 days to be captured. That's one patient photographer! 3. Shakespeare left his wife his "second best bed" in his will. Who got his first best bed we wonder?

4. Income tax was introduced in 1799, to pay for weapons and equipment in preparation for the Napoleonic Wars. 5. Monaco has the highest life expectancy in the world, as well as the most millionaires per capita. If we spent all day swanning about on yachts and shopping then we might live longer too! 6. The practise

## USEFUL NUMBERS

Elders Voice Handyperson Service:  
020 8206 7506

Elders Voice Floating Support Service:  
020 8206 7504

Elders Voice Wellbeing Centre  
020 8206 7503

Elders Voice Advice & Information:  
020 8968 8170

Brent Adult Social Services:  
020 8937 4300

Brent Samaritans:  
116 123 free from any phone  
0330 094 5717 local call charges apply

TrustMark (trusted tradespeople):  
0333 555 1234

Checkatrade  
0333 014 6190

Sufra NW London Foodbank:  
020 3441 1335

The Trussell Trust Brent Foodbank:  
0203 7455 972

Brent Carers Centre:  
020 3802 7070

Citizens Advice Brent:  
020 8438 1249

Brent Memory Service:  
020 8206 3950

Alzheimer's Society:  
0300 2221122

Age UK Hillingdon, Harrow and Brent:  
020 8756 3040

Brent Gateway Partnership:  
020 3948 0600

Ashford Place Community Centre:  
020 8208 8590

Re-engage:  
0800 716543

Tax Help for Older People:  
01308 488066

of yoga can be traced back to over 5,000 years ago, but some researchers suggest it is 10,000 years old.