Emily Evans

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International Longevity Centre UK

Latest news

ILC Friday three

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- UK Better Lives Index - how does your local authority rank?
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Reversing the lens – a look at the GM night time economy



How can a city region famed for its world-class nightlife make sure everyone can enjoy it – at any age? We worked with the GM Ageing Hub and GM Night Time Economy teams at Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) to explore how Greater Manchester can create a night time economy that works for all ages. Our research draws on surveys, interviews and workshops to illustrate what encourages people to go out, the obstacles they face, and how to make evenings more inclusive

and vibrant. Our Dusk to dawn report, published today, argues that the region could unlock a significant longevity dividend by rethinking what happens after dark.

Greater Manchester is a city region that includes Manchester, Salford, Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan. This region is ageing and changing. While it boasts world-class culture, sport and hospitality, much of the night time economy still caters mainly to younger people, with late nights focused on alcohol - and not all parts of the region are equal when it comes to amenities.

The city region's night time economy supports nearly half a million workers and generates over £6 billion in value each year. Yet, for too long the assumption has been that older people aren't interested in going out at night. Greater Manchester residents told us they want to go out and enjoy themselves, but face barriers – from safety concerns and poor transport to inaccessible venues and simply having no one to go with.

People want different things. "I'd like to go out more in Manchester city centre," said one participant. "But venues increasingly feel like places for 30- to 50-year-olds with plenty of disposable income." While others found getting out and about difficult: "Everything closes early. You want to stay out, but there's nowhere to go and the buses stop running." And another: "Because of my mobility issues," another respondent told us, "I don't want to go to crowded places anymore or mix with people I don't want to."

But people also described what would draw them out. "My dream night out would start with a small, local meal with my closest friends before heading to a gallery or a similar space for some sophisticated drinks," said one. "I'd then want to see some live music in a cool (but not overcrowded) bar... I'd like to get moderately tipsy, not drunk, and enjoy walking home with my friends."

Others wanted simpler pleasures: "Nice meal followed by dancing at a gig, no trouble, bus home." Another said: "I just want somewhere warm, friendly and safe to go – somewhere you can see familiar faces and not feel out of place." Others spoke about wanting better transport and earlier, quieter options, especially on Sundays, described as "the loneliest day of the week."

ILC Chief Executive, David Sinclair, said: "The night time offer in parts of Greater Manchester is world class – but in other parts, it's not, and it needs to evolve. With an ageing population, we can't rely on young people alone to keep our bars, venues and restaurants thriving. This isn't about partying all night – it's about creating reasons to stay out, connect and belong."

The report sets out seven prototype ideas to make nights out more appealing and accessible. They include The Square Deal – bundled food, entertainment and transport offers at clear price points; Friends for the night – intergenerational 'Gig Buddy' schemes and chatty cafés; Healthy nights, vibrant towns – more non-alcoholic and healthy food options; and Sunday Funday – livelier town centres and extended Sunday buses.

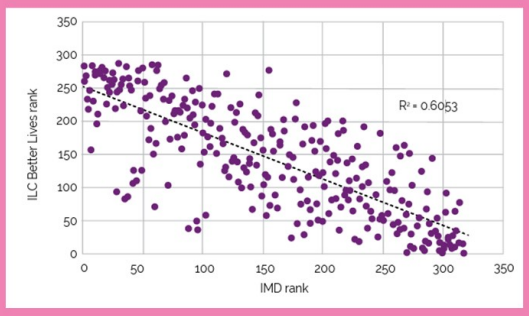
Cllr Bev Craig, Leader of Manchester City Council and GMCA portfolio lead for Economy, Business & Inclusive Growth, said: "Designing nightlife around health, inclusion and accessibility doesn't just make social sense, it makes economic sense too."

If we listen to what people want – and avoid making assumptions about who the night time economy is for – we can design evenings around inclusion, safety and shared experience. In doing so, Greater Manchester's nightlife can truly work for everyone, from dusk to dawn. You can read the full report via the button below.

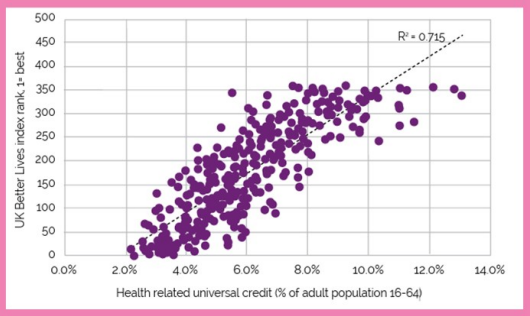
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UK Better Lives Index – how does your local authority rank?

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Last week ILC launched the UK Better Lives Index, our new tool mapping health, wealth and opportunity across 359 local authorities. The launch event, hosted by M&G and supported by the Hallmark Foundation, brought together leaders from government, business and civil society to explore what the data tells us – and how we can use it to build better lives for everyone, in every place.

Clive Bolton, CEO of Life Insurance at M&G, opened the event by describing why partnerships like this matter. "The pensions and investment industry has a critical role to play in ensuring that the process continues – where each generation supports other generations when they can and receives support when they need it," he said. "The Better Lives Index is another important contribution to ILC's work."

ILC's Chair of Trustees, Lawrence Churchill, set the tone for the discussion, noting that longevity "is the most extraordinary change to happen in human civilisation" – but also that "longer lives are too often viewed as a liability rather than an asset." He argued that the UK must start treating longevity as an opportunity to drive growth, health and community resilience.

The Index brings together nine measures – from life expectancy and child poverty to avoidable mortality and employment – providing a unique picture of where in the UK people are thriving and where they are falling behind.

Presenting the findings, Anna van Renen explained: "We've got massive spatial inequalities in health, wealth and opportunity across the life course, and tackling those inequalities needs evidence and long-term planning. That's where the UK Better Lives Index comes in." She highlighted that life expectancy at birth varies by nine years between Richmond upon Thames and Blackpool, while child poverty exceeds 40% in Oldham, Pendle and Bradford.

Ben Franklin, ILC's Deputy Chief Executive, added: "We've almost become used to inequality – used to talking about a 20-year healthy life expectancy gap as if that's normal. It shouldn't be. Growth is necessary but not sufficient; what matters is how that growth is distributed."

The panel also heard from Susan Halliwell, Chief Executive of Bracknell Forest Council – ranked fourth overall in the Index – and Sunder Katwala, Director of British Future. Susan spoke about the importance of connected communities: “People really identify with their place and support each other. That’s what makes local growth sustainable.” Sunder called for “overcoming fatalism” and “rebuilding trust and fairness” across generations and regions.

Chris Pond, Chair of the Financial Services Consumer Panel, praised ILC’s research and warned that “inequality is very expensive”. He said: “It reduces the overall level of economic growth because economic activity for significant sections of the population is lower than it could be. All the evidence shows that inequality is worse for all of us, not just for those experiencing it. We all pay a heavy price for living in an unequal society.”

Closing the event, Stephen Burke of the Hallmark Foundation described it as “the end of the beginning” for the project. “The challenge now is how we use these indices so that ageing well becomes common globally and nationally, for all our citizens,” he said.

With support and charitable grants from Edwards Lifesciences, Pfizer and the Hallmark Foundation, ILC’s UK Better Lives Index offers policymakers, councils and communities an invaluable resource – and a call to action. As Lawrence Churchill summed up: “Longer lives can bring significant social and economic benefits – if we make better decisions about health, work and community.”

Do have a look at the UK Better Lives Index via the button below.

EXPLORE HERE

Supporting our systems - preventing disease across our lifecourse



World Pneumonia Day, marked every year on 12 November, is a global reminder that pneumonia – a preventable and treatable disease – continues to claim lives across all age groups. While it remains the leading infectious cause of death in children under five, it is also a major and growing threat to older people and those with weakened immune systems.

As populations age, our understanding of pneumonia and its prevention must evolve. This year, the International Longevity Centre UK (ILC) is marking World Pneumonia Day by highlighting how ageing immune systems, patchy vaccine coverage, and missed opportunities in prevention are putting lives at risk.

Two new ILC pieces of work – our research report *Supporting our systems: Addressing immunosenescence and improving adult immunisation in Europe* and the second wave analysis of our Pneumococcal Vaccination Atlas – make a clear case for rethinking how we protect people across the life course.

The Supporting our systems report highlights the impact of immunosenescence – the gradual weakening of the immune system from around age 50 onwards. This natural decline makes older adults more susceptible to infections like pneumonia and reduces how well vaccines work. Despite this, most vaccination programmes across Europe still focus heavily on children and younger adults, leaving millions of older people unprotected.

As David Sinclair, ILC Chief Executive, said: "As we age, our immune systems weaken, leaving us more vulnerable to diseases that vaccines could otherwise prevent. Yet our policies are still too often built around rigid age thresholds rather than the reality of how our bodies change over time. Investing in prevention and tailored science isn't a luxury – it's essential if we want to unlock the economic and social benefits of longevity."

The report calls on governments to lower the age thresholds for routine vaccinations such as flu, to invest in enhanced vaccines designed to support ageing immune systems, and to increase the share of health budgets spent on prevention. It also urges public health bodies to close inequality gaps by working with communities to improve access and uptake.

Meanwhile, the Pneumococcal Vaccination Atlas tracks vaccine recommendations, coverage and funding across 42 European countries. It finds that while infant coverage remains high (nearly 90%), older adults and at-risk groups remain dangerously under-protected. One in four countries still don't offer pneumococcal vaccination to those with underlying conditions, and coverage for older adults varies widely – from under 10% in France and Spain to over 75% in Scotland.

Patrick Swain, ILC's Head of Partnerships and External Relations, who has been involved on the ILC's work on the role of vaccines in preventing ill health said: "While progress has been made, gaps in uptake remain. Policymakers acted quickly to protect older people and at-risk groups during the pandemic, but since then momentum has faded. We need that same sense of urgency now to prevent illness and death from pneumococcal disease."

As Europe's population ages, preventing pneumonia and other respiratory infections must become a cornerstone of healthy ageing policy. Vaccination shouldn't stop at childhood – it must be seen as a lifelong investment in health, productivity and resilience.

By acting earlier, investing in better vaccines, and ensuring access for everyone, we can help people stay well for longer – reducing pressure on health systems and enabling more of us to live not just longer lives, but better ones.

Our work on immunosenescence has been supported by CSL Seqirus. You can read the report, Supporting our systems, here. And explore the Pneumococcal Vaccination Atlas, developed with the support of MSD, via the button below.

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The Friday three newsletter is edited by Emily Evans, ILC's Senior Communications and Engagement Manager, and is generally sent out fortnightly

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