Emily Evans

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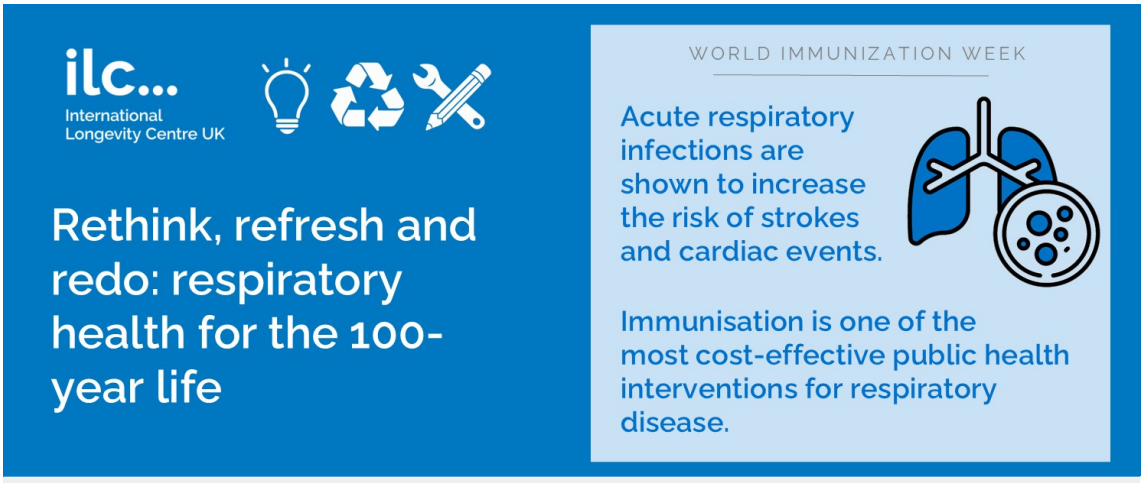
International Longevity Centre UK

Latest news

ILC Friday three

- Rethink, refresh and redo - respiratory health and the 100-year life
- Global Intergenerational Week - ways to bring generations together
- A sustainable, working economy - how long lives are key to growth

Rethink, refresh & redo – respiratory health for the 100-year life



The theme for this years' World Immunisation Week is *For every generation, vaccines work* and over the past 50 years, vaccines have saved more than 150 million lives. The question now is whether vaccination systems are fit for societies where people are living longer and spending more of those years in poor health. Respiratory

diseases have increasingly emerged as a major global health challenge. Well before the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization had already identified this as a pressing issue, highlighting the need for sustained, long-term strategies to address the growing burden.

Preventable respiratory diseases like pertussis (or "whooping cough") illustrate the lag in our health systems. Cases have risen sharply across Europe, including a 1,600% increase in England in 2024. Nearly six in ten confirmed cases are now in people aged 15 and over. Symptoms in adults are often misdiagnosed or missed altogether, allowing infections to circulate and increasing risks for infants. In adults, pertussis also causes significant quality-of-life issues, often for months. What is still treated as a childhood disease is now a feature of adult health.

Respiratory infections, more widely, are a major and under-recognised driver of poor health in later life. Across Europe, influenza alone is associated with around 40,000 deaths each year. Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) leads to more than 150,000 adult hospitalisations annually. These infections can increase the likelihood of non-communicable diseases – for example, the risk of a heart attack is around six times higher in the week following a confirmed influenza infection.

By 2100, one in three people in the EU will be aged over 65. Life expectancy has risen from around 67 in 1950 to more than 80 today. Healthy life expectancy has not kept pace. For those born now, more than half of the years lived beyond 65 are expected to be spent in poor health. Preventable respiratory illness is a significant part of that gap.

The economic case for action is well established. Vaccination is one of the most cost-effective public health interventions available, with evidence from the Office of Health Economics suggesting that every £1 invested can deliver up to £19 in return. Pertussis alone is estimated to cost the UK hundreds of millions of pounds each year in healthcare and wider economic impacts.

Coverage and delivery remain uneven. Some places have no clear recommendations for older age groups. Where adult vaccination programmes exist, uptake is inconsistent. Sources of data are limited, and European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control does not routinely collect coverage data for adults. Within countries, lower-income groups and marginalised communities are less likely to be vaccinated and more likely to experience worse outcomes.

Health systems must focus on population immunisation across the life course. Adult immunisation is often fragmented, with limited awareness among both the public and healthcare professionals. In the case of pertussis, clinicians frequently do not suspect it in adults. Testing can be costly and access uneven. Booster uptake is low, in part because there are few systems in place to prompt it.

Many countries recognise the value of adopting a prevention-focused model of health care, but vaccination – one of the most well-established preventative interventions is not yet embedded within it. The shift towards community-based care and earlier intervention creates an opportunity to change that. Immunisation across the life course helps people stay healthy for longer, and avoids the costs of treating illness later.

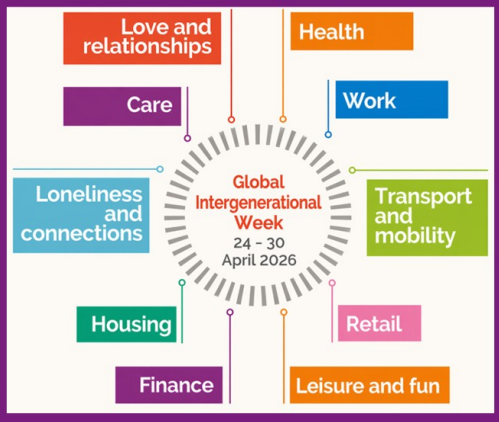
Rethinking vaccination means recognising it as part of maintaining functional ability over longer lives, not just preventing acute illness. Refreshing delivery means moving towards active systems – recall, follow-up and routine engagement with adult

populations. Redoing measurement means setting clear targets for adult uptake and treating vaccination as a core component of health system performance.
Whether our long lives are lived in good health depends in part on how seriously prevention is taken. Vaccination is central to that.

ILC's latest blog written to mark World Immunisation Week can be found here You can download ILC's report, *From the 100-day cough to the 100-year life: Pertussis, prevention and the future of life course immunisation*, via the button below.

READ MORE

Global Intergenerational Week - ways to bring generations together



At a time when the world has never seemed more fragile, divided and uncertain, we must try much harder to bring people together and create a brighter future.
Stephen Burke, Director, United for All Ages & CEO, Hallmark Foundation

Our friends at United for All Ages have published a new paper for Global Intergenerational Week – Changing the world together – bringing together 26 examples of intergenerational work from across the UK and internationally. Rather than abstract arguments about the value of intergenerational work, the document sets out examples of what people are already doing in housing, community life, care, culture and sport.

Some of the strongest examples are the ones that aim to address real pressures in people's lives. Homeshare UK and Two Generations, for example, connect younger people struggling to find affordable housing with older people who have spare rooms and want company. It is a practical response to loneliness, housing costs and underused space, and it is easy to see how approaches like this could grow through local partnerships and services.

Other projects challenge how ageing itself is framed. Ibasho, which began in Japan, puts older people in leadership roles within their communities rather than treating them as recipients of support. That is an important shift. Too often, older people are discussed mainly in terms of need. Ibasho starts from contribution, participation and leadership.

The paper also includes examples working at a much larger scale. The West Ham United Foundation's Foundry Community Hub in Beckton supports up to 4,000 participants a week and helps the club reach more than 60,000 people a year through programmes covering education, employment, physical and mental health and social

inclusion. That matters because it shows intergenerational work is not limited to small local projects. Large institutions can build it into mainstream community infrastructure too.

We were also pleased to see ILC's work on a night-time economy for all ages in Greater Manchester included in the paper. That project looked at what encourages people to go out, the barriers they face and the opportunities to create a more inclusive evening culture. It is a good example of intergenerational thinking applied not just to programmes but to how places and local economies work.

Stephen Burke, Director of United for All Ages, writes: "At a time when the world has never seemed more fragile, divided and uncertain, we must try much harder to bring people together and create a brighter future… Connection is the antidote to division."

That idea runs through the whole collection of 26 stories. The examples are different in size and focus, but they share a common starting point: people of different ages should not be living increasingly separate lives.

Global Intergenerational Week will also include an international webinar hosted by Intergenerational England on Wednesday 29 April, from 12pm to 1:30pm. The session will bring together global leaders, researchers and practitioners to explore what works in intergenerational practice across the world and where more progress is needed.

Speakers include David Sinclair, ILC Chief Executive, and contributors from the World Health Organization and British Future. The webinar will also mark the launch of Intergenerational England's International Intergenerational Practice Report, bringing together global research and learning in one place.

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A sustainable, working economy - how long lives are key to growth

Nearly half of our 15,000 people at Veolia UK are over the age of 50. Their work underpins local economies, sustains communities, and ensures the smooth functioning of critical infrastructure. These are the skills we need to supercharge economic growth in this country. They are the backbone of the green economy. Beth Whittaker, Chief HR Officer, Veolia Northern Europe



This week Julia Buckley, Labour MP for Shrewsbury and member of the Environmental Audit Committee, brought together MPs, peers and sector leaders in Parliament for a timely discussion on the workforce behind the UK's green economy.

The dinner, hosted in the House of Commons as part of our partnership with Veolia, offered an early look at our forthcoming report Working longer, working greener. The UK cannot meet its green ambitions without a workforce strategy that works for people in their 50s and beyond.

Environmental services – from waste and recycling to water and bioenergy – already rely heavily on experienced workers. These are the people keeping essential services running day in, day out. But vacancies are rising, skill shortages are deepening, and without action labour constraints will start to affect delivery and growth.

The discussion brought together MPs from the Work and Pensions Committee, the Environmental Audit Committee and other parliamentarians including former Secretary of State, Lord David Blunkett, alongside employers, skills experts and occupational health leaders. Representatives from Skills England and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development added a practical focus on workforce development and job quality.

As Beth Whittaker, Chief Human Resources Officer, Veolia Northern Europe, said: “We can’t plug the skills gap if we only look at new entrants to the workforce. Many of the people underpinning the UK’s green economy are over 50. They have decades of experience and know-how and are critical to our operations. If you lose these people and their knowledge, you don’t just lose great colleagues, you stifle economic growth.”

The report we will publish ahead of the May elections sets out what this means in practice. It combines new labour market analysis with sector-level workforce modelling and insights from Veolia’s experience, including its 50+ talent strategy. Supporting older workers is central to delivering cleaner growth and stronger local services.

Alongside this work, we are starting a new project with the US based Innovation Resource Center for Human Resources (IRC4HR), looking at how work for older people could evolve over the next 50 years.

Longer lives are reshaping labour markets, but the outcomes are not fixed. For some, working longer could mean more flexible and fulfilling careers. For others, it risks extending time in poor-quality work. The difference will come down to choices about job design, skills, health and how technology is used.

The project will develop a set of scenario-based futures across key sectors, exploring how work at older ages could evolve under different policy, labour market and technological conditions.

We are keen to hear from those with practical experience. If you would like to contribute to the IRC4HR project, please do get in touch via the button below.

GET IN TOUCH HERE

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

To keep up-to-date with ILC events throughout the year, please continue to check our website on a regular basis. If you are interested in learning more about our Partners Programme, please click here.

Our work is reliant on the generosity of our supporters, please donate to ILC here.

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