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International Longevity Centre UK

Latest news

ILC Friday three

- Reasons for optimism - the dedication of MPs
- Mental health - making it matter, regardless of age
- We're recruiting - might you be our next Chair of Trustees?

Reasons for optimism - the dedication of MPs



The sudden announcement of a UK General Election on 4th July and the consequent dissolution of Parliament sent everyone involved in politics, from MPs and bill managers to journalists and event organisers, scurrying. Cancelling long-planned meetings, receptions, and finding replacement speakers for politicians heading to

their constituencies causes mere headaches, but washed-up legislation represents much more serious opportunities lost, impacting thousands. However, the mood of the country, reflected by the polls, indicates that people are very ready for change.

With over one in six MPs standing down, the General Election represents a reset moment regardless of voter preference on the day. This rejuvenation of the political landscape means new candidates with fresh ideas and a willingness to adopt innovative solutions for better lives, including those set out in our report, One Hundred Not Out: Route Map for Long Lives. Whether addressing the challenges of our ageing population, improving public services, or enhancing economic opportunities, new leaders will bring fresh perspectives, invigorating national discourse and policy.

But as this Parliament is washed up and MPs pack up their cramped parliamentary quarters, perhaps never to return, we reflect on the dedication and service of many of our elected representatives. Where headlines are dominated by scandal and sensationalism, it is easy to overlook the tireless efforts of backbench MPs who work diligently on behalf of their constituents. These unsung heroes navigate the capricious whims of voters and the relentless scrutiny of the tabloids, all while championing the causes of those who might otherwise go unheard.

For example, Dame Diana Johnson, the Labour MP for Kingston upon Hull North, has tirelessly campaigned for the rights of those affected by the contaminated blood scandal, seeking accountability and compensation for victims. Similarly, James Arbuthnot, now Lord Arbuthnot of Edrom, who served as the Conservative MP for North East Hampshire until 1997, arguably played a crucial role in seeking justice for victims of the Post Office scandal.

Florence Eshalomi, the Labour and Co-operative MP for Vauxhall where ILC's office is located, is another passionate advocate for her constituents. Elected in 2019, she has endured ignorance and racism from fellow MPs, and like many of her female colleagues, unwarranted social media abuse. Yet she has quickly made a name for herself by championing issues such as housing, social justice, and equality. While still very young, Eshalomi cared for her mother, a teacher forced to retire early due to ill health. Equally, also in the face of adversity, Kim Leadbeater, the Labour MP for Batley and Spen, has shown a deep commitment to public service. Elected in 2021, Leadbeater was determined to continue the legacy of her sister, the late Jo Cox, who was brutally murdered while promoting unity and resilience within the same constituency.

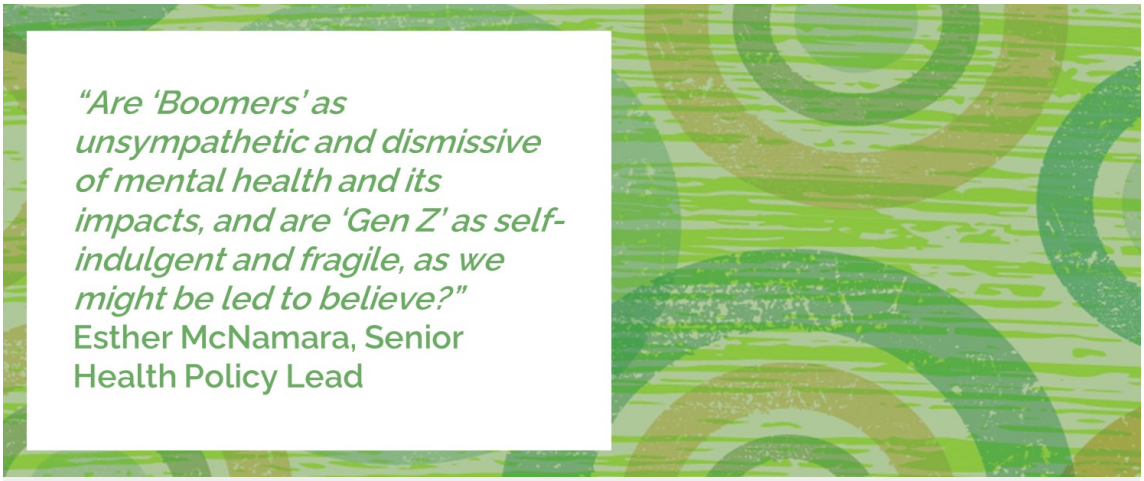
Perhaps someone who best symbolises the indomitable spirit and commitment to public service of many of our MPs is Craig Mackinlay, Conservative MP for South Thanet. Mackinlay, this week, returned to the Chamber with four prosthetic limbs following a battle with sepsis contracted in September 2023.

While far from perfect, we thank the class of 2019 and wish them luck. And looking forward, we hope for more talented and dedicated individuals determined to make a positive difference to our long lives.

If you have any optimistic suggestions or solutions for longer lives, please do let us know via the button below.

REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

Mental health - making it matter, regardless of age



Are 'Boomers' unsympathetic and dismissive of mental health, and are 'Gen Z' self-indulgent and fragile, as often portrayed? All too often it seems that age and intergenerational conflict frequently permeate public discourse on mental health. In some media circles, where engagement is driven by simplified provocations, it can seem like different age groups have entirely different understandings of mental health and its treatment.

Addressing such assumptions and conflicts is crucial for reducing the burden of mental health diseases and the stigma surrounding them. To mark Mental Health Awareness Week and in advance of our Mental Health Matters event in Geneva, ILC's latest blog highlights the importance of interrogating existing stereotypes and identifying where the burden of disease actually falls. By moving beyond age-based distinctions and focusing on the psychosocial needs of underserved groups, we can better respond to the rising burden of mental ill health in the UK and globally.

Our research shows that mental health across the UK is marked by inequalities, particularly by age and socioeconomic background. Challenging age-based orthodoxies and ensuring equitable access to mental healthcare and meaningful community activities is vital for a cohesive society. Failure to address these needs results in significant collective losses for families, communities, workplaces, and the economy.

In 2022-23, the UK lost 17.1 million working days to work-related stress, depression, and anxiety. Younger workers are increasingly affected, with evidence showing they are more likely to be absent due to mental ill health than older colleagues. Previous ILC research indicated that poor mental health in youth significantly impacts employment trajectories later in life. A life course approach to mental health is cost-effective for economies, ensuring younger people remain mentally well and productive. However, we must also ensure older people are not neglected in mental healthcare, recognising their continued value to society beyond economic contributions.

In 2023, nearly a quarter of 17- to 19-year-olds and one in five 20- to 25-year-olds in England had a probable mental health disorder. Experts involved in our latest research programme noted that younger people are more proactive in educating themselves about mental health. However, concerns about self-diagnosis are well-founded, highlighting the need for accurate information.

Older people face barriers to receiving support, with fewer discussions about anxiety and depression with healthcare practitioners. Despite positive outcomes from talking therapy, ageist assumptions among clinicians often prevent older adults from

receiving appropriate referrals. Older adults' physical health issues also compete for limited consultation time, further hindering mental health treatment.

Factors such as poor housing, loneliness, and pressures in schools and workplaces affect mental wellbeing. These issues have been exacerbated by the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Social and economic barriers to leisure activities contribute to mild-moderate anxiety and depression, with austerity measures in the UK disproportionately affecting those in poverty.

To equitably reduce the burden of mental health issues, tackling ageism and ensuring access to mental healthcare for all age groups is essential. Investing in mental health across age groups is crucial for sustaining our economy and society. Without immediate action, the long-term costs will be significant.

READ MORE

We're recruiting - might you be our new Chair of Trustees?



As we have written previously, we have a Board of Trustees representing a wealth of talent and an impressive range of expertise. Our Board has thrived under the expert leadership of Nigel Waterson but, after over decade as a member of the Board, Nigel will be standing down at the end of the year.

So we are recruiting for a new Chair to lead our Board of Trustees and would like your help to find someone to represent the ILC as the UK's leading authority on the impact of longevity on society.

The Chair will be a voice for ILC, promoting the work of the organisation, chairing and speaking at events as well as representing the organisation to the media or in meetings with politicians or funders.

The ideal candidate will:

- understand charity governance;
- have strong influencing skills and good political and policy connections (UK and ideally internationally);

- have good understanding of and connections with businesses, particularly those who are likely audiences and funders of ILC's work;
- have an interest in ILC's work, care about the issues and have a passion for making a difference.

If you or someone you know might be brilliant for the role of Chair or might be interested in joining the Board as a Trustee, do share and download the Recruitment Pack via the button below. **The deadline for applications is 9am on Monday 10 June 2024** with interviews being held in June and early July.

REGISTER HERE

To keep up-to-date with ILC events throughout the year, please continue to check our website on a regular basis.

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