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International Longevity Centre UK

Latest news

ILC Friday three

- Reversing the lens - a closer look at political party conferences
- Building better lives - ILC's breakfast roundtable with Independent Age
- Intergenerational workplaces - what is the state of play?

Reversing the lens – a closer look at political party conferences



Party conferences still look the same: banners, ministerial speeches, fringe meetings on everything from protecting IP in the creative industries or women's sport to the role of vaccinations in prevention – and everything in between. There are also cameras, limp sandwiches and queues at security, as well as passionate activists

taking time off work for their political Glastonbury. While politics has shifted beyond recognition, the format hasn't changed in decades – but the feel has.

It's all more polished and corporate now. Big consultancies, banks and tech firms dominate the exhibition hall. Costs have soared, pricing out many small charities and voluntary groups. The grassroots presence that once gave conferences their texture and unpredictability is thinner. Research shows how these gatherings have become professional lobbying marketplaces rather than genuine member-led forums.

From year to year, you tend to forget how unsettling it can be to battle through the protesters spanning the political spectrum just outside the secure area – you're immediately hit by leaflets on every possible issue, campaign songs at deafening volume, and, this year more than usual, some pretty confronting images and tactics. It's a full sensory onslaught before 7.30am.

Once inside the bubble, it's long days and later nights: catching up with people you only see once a year, darting between fringes, trying to talk to as many MPs, peers, advisers and journalists as possible. Social batteries drain fast. Cheap wine and beer flows freely – but isn't a great networking strategy when you've got three more 7.00am starts to survive. Then there's the dance of timing: when to interrupt a clearly exhausted frontbencher with your 30-second pitch, how to stand out from hundreds of others doing exactly the same.

From an ILC point of view, this time of year is a bit of a slog – but a valuable one. At the Labour conference this week in Liverpool, as described below, we shared early insights from the UK Better Lives Index, urging action to shape a healthier, happier future for everyone and showing how prevention, place-based investment and fairness across the life course can deliver real change.

As at the Liberal Democrat Conference, last week – and very likely at the Conservative Party Conference next week – "us against Reform UK" emerged as the unifying message. Many conversations circled back to the risk of a populist "change" offer filling the vacuum if voters don't feel delivery. Many bemoaned the lack of a clear values-based purpose for this government but there was also a hunger to see politics connect with the lived experience of everyday life. Wayne Swan, Australia's former Deputy PM, put it plainly: "It should not be getting the voters to like you, but making them feel that you like them."

It's a reminder that politics isn't really about what happens in the bubble – the resignations, leadership gossip, social media clips. Most of what dominates the "conference lens" means little to voters. And if an election were tomorrow, the polls suggest Reform might emerge as the biggest single party because people are desperate for change and aren't yet feeling change in their own lives.

There are policy areas, like neighbourhood health hubs, which promise positive change but progress will take time to land. And people are not in the mood to be patient. Many argue the government needs to go further and faster.

Political Party Conferences are exhausting and imperfect. But they're still the lifeblood of British Politics and have been regular events from the early 1900s, if not before. They remain one of the few places where policy ideas, networks and influence gather in one spot – and small charities, like the ILC, who approach them strategically gain a great deal from them.

If you are already thinking about next year's party conferences and want to work with us please do get in touch with Emily Evans, ILC's Senior Communication and Engagements Manager via the button below.

GET IN TOUCH

Building better lives - our breakfast roundtable with Independent Age



A discussion on building better lives

At the conference in Liverpool this week, Independent Age and ILC brought together MPs, local policy makers, councillors, businesses and charities for a breakfast roundtable on *Better places to grow up and grow old in*. The discussion centred around the UK Better Lives Index, which has already mapped the scale of inequalities across the country – from income and health outcomes to opportunity and resilience – and focused firmly on what comes next.

The Better Lives Index provides a powerful diagnostic tool: we now know where people are thriving and where they are being left behind. But the time has come to move from describing problems to testing and scaling practical solutions. Too often, local areas are forced to "reinvent the wheel" rather than build on proven models. Sharing what works – whether on neighbourhood health, economic participation, or social cohesion – will help places move faster and use scarce resources well.

Attendees argued that a fairer, healthier UK depends on long-term investment to stop ill health and disadvantage taking root. This means shifting some focus from acute care to early intervention and community-based health models. Ideas included integrated "neighbourhood health hubs" bringing together medical, social and intergenerational support; family-focused prevention programmes; and better outreach to groups often missed by mainstream services.

Practical local examples inspired the room: Liverpool City Region's "cradle to career" approach, which has reduced young people not in education, employment or training; Blackpool's Fulfilling Lives project with its shadow board of service users; the Metropolitan Police partnership in Barnet as part of the Clear, Hold, Build initiative; and Independent Age's Make ageing fair campaign tackling financial hardship for older people, from social water tariffs to uprated Local Housing Allowance.

Another priority was helping people stay in work for longer. Preventing workforce exit is easier – and more cost-effective – than trying to bring people back after they leave. Employers, especially SMEs, need practical help to adapt jobs, open conversations about health and caring, and retain experienced staff. Participants also stressed the importance of supporting carers as part of the employment agenda

and ensuring economic inactivity for those over 50 remains visible for DWP and Treasury policymakers.

Better use of data and evidence could transform impact. Attendees called for smarter data sharing so clinicians and employers can intervene earlier – for instance, supporting carers before a crisis forces them out of work. There was strong appetite for a national mechanism to collate and share prevention and community health evidence.

But national policy also matters: employment rights, housing, energy and welfare support all shape local health and economic outcomes. Government must work with, not act on, communities – investing in anchor institutions and long-term place-based change.

The Better Lives Index shows us the gaps. The next step is to act – aligning national levers with local leadership, investing in prevention, and spreading proven models. The reward could be transformative: healthier, fairer and more resilient communities where more of us can look forward to better, longer lives.

As mentioned in previous mailings, the ILC will be launching our interactive UK Better Lives Index tool on **Monday 3 November 2025** from **10.15am** to **11.45am**. The event will be at the offices of M&G plc in the City of London and if you are able to attend please do register via the button below. The event is also supported by the Hallmark Foundation which – alongside educational grants from Edwards Lifesciences and Pfizer – has made our work on the UK Better Lives Index possible.

REGISTER HERE

Intergenerational workplaces - what is the state of play?

"While the concept of "reverse mentoring" often gets attention, the most effective initiatives are based on mutuality and a two-way street of learning. The best organisations foster a "learning from and with each other" culture. Instead of a one-way transfer of knowledge, these programs are platforms of mutual benefit."
- Rebecca Robins



At the roundtable we learnt from Intergenerational England that for the first time in history, five generations are working side by side. The organisation's latest report published on behalf of the Intergenerational Workplace Taskforce highlights the major opportunity presented by longer lives and multigenerational workforces. Yet the report shows how far we still have to go if we want age diversity to be a strength, not a source of division.

The headline findings are striking:

- 93% of young people (16 to 25) say they've experienced age-based discrimination at work
- Half of over-50s report facing ageism in the past year
- Yet only 6% of UK employers currently have strategies in place to support multigenerational teams

Those numbers speak for themselves. We talk a lot about diversity and inclusion, but generational diversity too often remains the poor relation.

What the State of Play report makes clear is that this isn't just a fairness issue – it's a productivity issue. Workplaces that embrace intergenerational practice see measurable gains. According to the report:

- Low-output performance drops from 25% to just 13%
- Employee engagement rises by 30%
- Turnover falls by 20%

That's a compelling business case. Intergenerational workplaces are not only fairer; they're stronger, more innovative and more resilient.

The report draws on case studies from the UK and abroad, showing what practical steps can look like. It also sets out a roadmap for action aimed at employers, HR leaders, policymakers and teams. We know that demographic change is reshaping the labour market – and that older people's participation is vital to economic growth. But this isn't just about older workers staying longer. It's about designing workplaces where every generation can thrive and contribute.

You can read the full report via the button below.

DOWNLOAD REPORT

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

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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