Emily Evans

From: International Longevity Centre <events@ilcuk.org.uk>
Sent: 31 October 2025 12:32
To: Emily Evans
Subject: Your Friday three - 31 October 2025

ILC Friday three - 31 October 2025 View this email in your browser

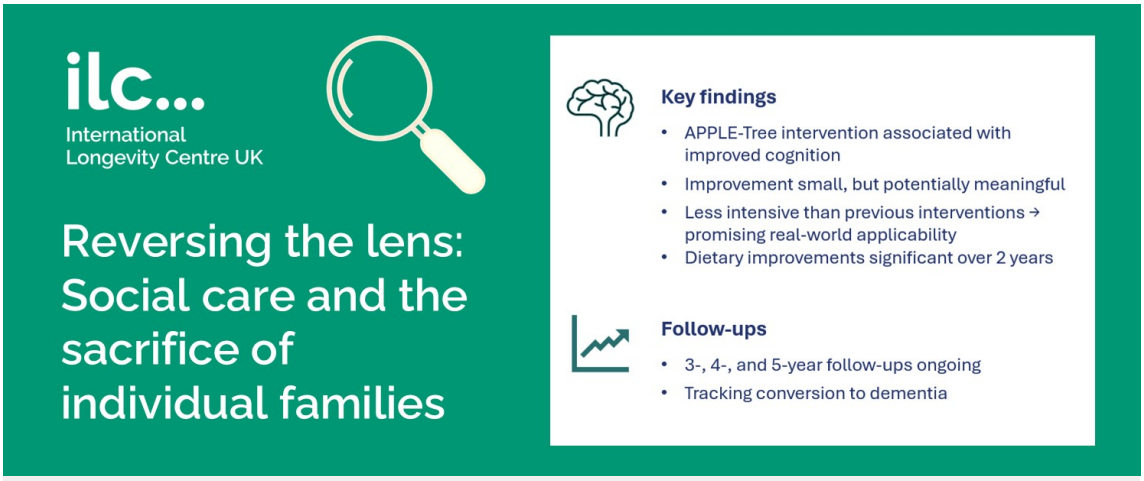
International Longevity Centre UK

Latest news

ILC Friday three

- Reversing the lens - a deliverable intervention preventing memory loss
- Healthy people, healthy planet - tackling these together
- Keeping active - the biggest public health win of our time?

Reversing the lens – an intervention preventing memory loss



On Tuesday last week, we were delighted to launch Queen Mary University of London's APPLE-Tree dementia prevention study, a project focused on helping people reduce their risk of dementia through lifestyle change, social connection, and community support.

The APPLE-Tree project is led by researchers at Queen Mary University of London and funded by the ESRC and NIHR. The ongoing six-year study has followed 748 people who were concerned about their memory but did not have dementia. Half took part in ten facilitated group sessions delivered via video call, supported by informal “tea breaks” and one-to-one catch-ups. The groups focused on small, sustainable lifestyle changes – eating more healthily, keeping active, connecting socially and cutting back on smoking and alcohol.

Over two years, participants who joined the APPLE-Tree sessions showed small but significant cognitive improvements compared with a control group. The gains were comparable to those achieved through much more intensive interventions. Crucially, the programme was run by non-clinical facilitators – making it far more scalable than many traditional models of dementia prevention.

Professor Claudia Cooper, Chief Investigator on the project, said that lifestyle and preventable health changes “can make a difference now”. Yet, as she noted, “people with memory concerns have told us they feel in limbo – between health and dementia, and don’t know where to go for help.” She argues that new neighbourhood health services – being developed as part of the government’s 10-year health plan to shift care from hospital to community settings – could provide the ideal setting to offer preventive support, with APPLE-Tree as one possible model.

Dr Harriet Demnitz-King, who co-authored the study, added that its low-intensity, remote format “could enable wide-scale implementation to support adults with memory concerns”. Participants themselves also highlighted the benefits that are less easily measured. One, Cecilia, described the groups as “exactly what I needed – an opportunity to connect with people with similar worries” and a space where practical advice and mutual support made day-to-day changes feel achievable. Speaking at the launch of the research, she said the programme had “changed my life” and called for more people to have access to this kind of support.

The ILC supported the dissemination of the study and helped organise its launch. We held an in-person event in the House of Lords, hosted by Lord Weir of Ballyholme, to mark the publication of the findings and highlight why dementia prevention matters more than ever.

Both Professor Cooper and Dr Demnitz-King presented the findings at the event which was chaired by Professor Sir Mark Caulfield from Queen Mary University. Other speakers included Dr Jeremy Isaacs (National Clinical Director for Dementia at the NHS), Professor Emily Oliver (University of Newcastle), Fiona Carragher (Alzheimer’s Society), and Cecilia Hammond, an APPLE-Tree participant.

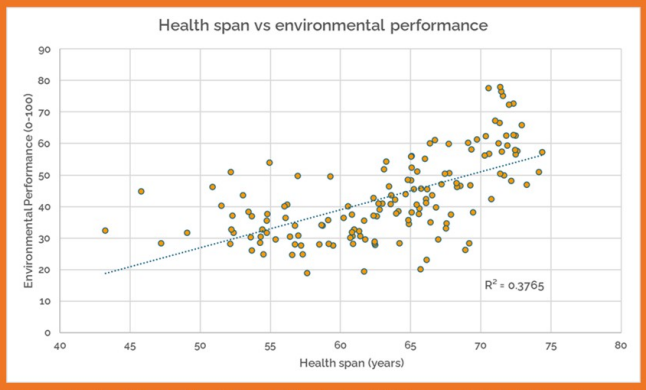
As the UK ages, it is vital to invest in prevention for conditions that become more common as we grow older – but are not an inevitable part of ageing. In the UK, an estimated 982,000 people are living with dementia and the cost of the disease has already reached £42 billion – and is projected to more than double to £90–£95 billion by 2040.

At ILC, we’ve long argued that helping people live well for longer means investing as much in prevention and care as in treatment. Proactive approaches like APPLE-Tree not only support healthier ageing but also reduce pressure on our health and care systems in the long term.

You can read more via the button below and access the full study paper published in The Lancet: Healthy Longevity here.

READ MORE

Healthy people, healthy planet - tackling these together



Source: ILC Healthy Ageing & Prevention Index (WHO, 2024 & Yale University, 2024

By reimagining and aligning climate and ageing policies, we can create a world that supports both long and healthy lives. Esther McNamara, former Co-Chair, ILC GA Climate Committee

As we know, climate change represents a unique challenge to our society, our financial systems, and the global economy. The latest issue of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries (IFoA) Longevity Bulletin highlights, amongst other things, the relationship between planetary health and population health in policymaking. One of the pieces by former ILC colleagues Esther McNamara and Sage Jeffries makes a compelling argument for why tackling climate change and population ageing must go hand in hand.

They write that "the climate crisis and increasing longevity are two of the most transformative phenomena of our time". Yet these challenges are still treated separately in policy and practice. The article highlights how environmental factors such as air quality, access to green spaces and sustainable diets are central to healthy ageing – and how the choices we make for planetary health directly influence how long and how well we live.

Analysis of ILC's Global Healthy Ageing and Prevention Index, shows that countries performing best on environmental sustainability also enjoy the longest and healthiest lives. Health span – the number of years people live in good health – correlates strongly with environmental performance. Countries that invest in clean energy, climate-resilient health systems and green infrastructure not only protect the planet but also promote longevity.

The piece points to practical examples of where climate and ageing agendas can align. Active travel policies that encourage walking and cycling reduce emissions while improving physical health. Age-friendly urban design creates more walkable, climate-resilient cities that benefit everyone. And environmental volunteering – such as programmes like Retirees in Service to the Environment (RISE) – empowers older people to contribute directly to climate solutions while improving their own wellbeing.

The relationship between longevity and climate change is reciprocal: healthier populations are better equipped to protect the environment, while sustainable environments support healthier, longer lives. Both challenges demand integrated, cross-sector action – and the best time to act is now.

That's why ILC's Global Alliance Climate Change Committee is working to make longevity and healthy ageing central to climate policy and innovation. So far, the committee has hosted global webinars, supported events across the ILC network – from ILC-UK's Future of Ageing Conference featuring Jonathan Porritt to ILC Australia's work on heatwaves and older people – and developed evidence reviews linking climate and longevity. Our work shows that older adults are not only vulnerable to climate change but also powerful agents of change, through green investment, sustainable consumption and volunteering.

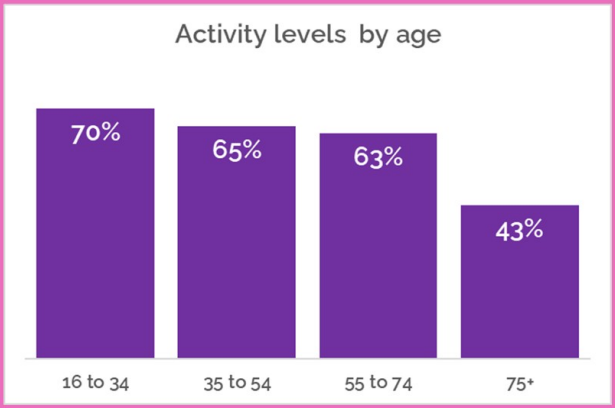
We're now expanding this work globally – publishing new research, shaping policy and seeking funding for a major programme on climate and longevity.
If you're passionate about bridging these agendas and helping to shape a healthier, more sustainable world, join us.

To find out more or express your interest, contact David Sinclair via the button below.

GET IN TOUCH

Keeping active - the biggest public health win of our time?

If we are a responsible government, a responsible political entity, all of us, civil society, civil service, and political leaders, I think we do have to tackle the problems of 15 to 20 years ago, because it's much easier and cheaper to do it now with a proper run-up than to wait until the completely predictable car crash hits us.
Sir Chris Whitty, 29 Oct 2025



Source: Sport England 2024 Active Lives Survey, published April 2025

This week, the Health and Social Care Select Committee held an oral evidence session as part of its short inquiry on Healthy Ageing: Physical Activity in an Ageing Society. The Government's Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Professor Sir Chris Whitty, emphasised that while ageing is inevitable, decline doesn't have to be. "If we could reduce the years of ill health people spend at the end of life to match those in the most affluent areas, we'd dramatically cut the pressure on health and social care." Sir Chris told MPs. The difference, he pointed out, is stark – more than a decade separates the healthy life expectancy of people in the richest and poorest communities.

Physical activity, he argued, is one of the easiest and most effective ways to narrow that gap. Exercise lowers risks of heart disease, cancer and diabetes, strengthens bones and muscles, improves balance, and can even delay or prevent dementia. "If we could delay dementia by five years, we'd halve the number of people living with it," he said – calling inactivity one of the most urgent, yet most fixable, drivers of poor health in later life.

Sir Chris also warned that England's ageing is not evenly spread. Rural and coastal communities – where as many as one in three residents are now over 65 – are ageing fastest. Yet these are often the very places where walking routes are unsafe, pavements are uneven, or there's no nearby gym or swimming pool. "People get trapped in their own homes," he said. "If we just levelled the pavements, many more would go out walking."

We know that inactivity becomes particularly pronounced after retirement, when work routines and commuting stop. The 2024 Active Lives Survey shows that 75% of people aged 55 to 74 do 30 minutes of exercise a week, dropping to 60% among 75 to 84-year-olds and just 37% for those aged 85 and over. Yet even small increases make a big difference. The CMO cited a recent US study which found that walking just 4,000 steps or less than two miles twice a week could reduce mortality by 26%. "If that were a drug," Sir Chris said, "the manufacturer would be making a fortune."

The later session featuring Sir Muir Gray, Dr Lis Boulton of Age UK and Dr Carole Easton from the Centre for Ageing Better echoed his message: keeping people strong, balanced and confident to move is essential if we want more of us to live not just longer but better.

Dr Lis Boulton stressed that activity must be personalised, accessible and social. Many older people, she noted, are put off by the word "exercise". Talking instead about "moving more" – dancing, walking the dog or gardening – helps reach those who don't see themselves as sporty. She described the Open University and Age UK's Take Five to Age Well campaign, which offers small, achievable actions, but also highlighted the need to tackle barriers such as poor housing, debt or loneliness alongside physical inactivity. "It's everything around people's lives that makes activity harder."

Sir Muir Gray urged a cultural shift towards lifelong learning and prevention. His Live Longer Better programme reframes retirement as a "renaissance" – a time for new learning about how to stay fit, connected and purposeful. He called for pension providers to become "knowledge providers", and for the NHS to view exercise prescriptions as seriously as medical ones.

Dr Carole Easton warned that ageism and inaccessible environments remain major obstacles. "Around a quarter of people over 50 self-limit what they do because of how they're seen." She echoed Sir Chris Whitty's call to action – invest now in the "unglamorous but vital" things that make activity possible: good lighting, benches, public toilets, safe paths and joined-up local services. "These are not luxuries," he told MPs. "They are the foundations of healthy ageing."

You can watch both sessions on Parliamentlive TV via the button below.

WATCH HERE

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.

Please follow us on social media via the links below for our latest news and event updates. Help support these events and our independent analysis. Donate to ILC here.

Copyright © 2025 International Longevity Centre UK
The Foundry
17 Oval Way
London, SE11 5RR
United Kingdom
ILC-UK is a registered charity (no. 1080496) incorporated with limited liability in England and Wales (company no. 3798902).

Please click here to unsubscribe or update your preferences.