Outlook

Your Friday three - 9 January 2026

From International Longevity Centre <events@ilcuk.org.uk>
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International Longevity Centre UK

Latest news

ILC Friday three

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- Getting organised - a little life admin goes a long way
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Rethink, recycle and redo - keeping New Year's resolutions



Another new year. Another chance to start again. We promise ourselves that this will be the year we go to the gym, eat better, sleep more, learn something new. We make plans, download apps, maybe even buy new trainers.

In early January, motivation is still high. By February, it has often gone.

A study in the late 1980s tracked 200 people who had made resolutions over two years. It found that 77% had kept their New Year's resolutions in the first week, while only 19% were still maintaining it after two years. More recent research suggests that a mere 9% of us will have stuck to the resolutions we've made by the end of the year.

This isn't because we are weak or lazy. It's because we ask too much of ourselves, too quickly, and we misunderstand how behavioural change really works – especially when we think about living well for longer.

Rethink the goal

Many resolutions fail because they are framed as sudden transformations. "Every day." "From now on." "Completely different." That mindset is at odds with sustainable change. Living longer and better is not about dramatic resets. It is about small, steady shifts that you can live with over years, not weeks.

Another problem is volume. We try to change everything at once – diet, exercise, work, relationships, finances. Each goal makes sense on its own, but together they compete for our time and energy. So, our attention and motivation are spread thin and progress stalls.

Very often, we make resolutions because everyone else around us is and not necessarily because we really want to. A better place to start might be to choose one thing that really matters. Something that would make daily life a little happier, easier or healthier if it changed.

Refresh how change fits into daily life

Resolutions often disappear not because they are hard, but because they are forgotten. Life carries on as normal. The same routines, the same pressures, and the same tiredness. The environment matters as much as motivation. Instead of relying on willpower, build reminders into everyday life. Put the goal somewhere you see it. Link it to an existing habit. Keep it simple enough to repeat even on busy or low-energy days.

At every age, consistency beats intensity. What you do most days counts far more than what you might do perfectly for a few weeks.

Redo your focus from outcomes to habits

Big targets can be inspiring, but they can also be discouraging when progress feels slow. A healthier way to think about change is to focus on the process – the small actions you can repeat. Walking some or all the way to work. Leaving your phone somewhere else when you go to bed. Cooking one meal with just leftovers each week. These may sound modest, but

over time our healthier habits compound.

Another option: don’t make any resolutions at New Year at all.

Not making a New Year’s resolution won’t automatically make someone happier or healthier. But the evidence does suggest that rigid, unrealistic resolutions often fail and can hurt motivation or self-esteem; and overall happiness and health are shaped by sustained patterns – not a single annual pledge.

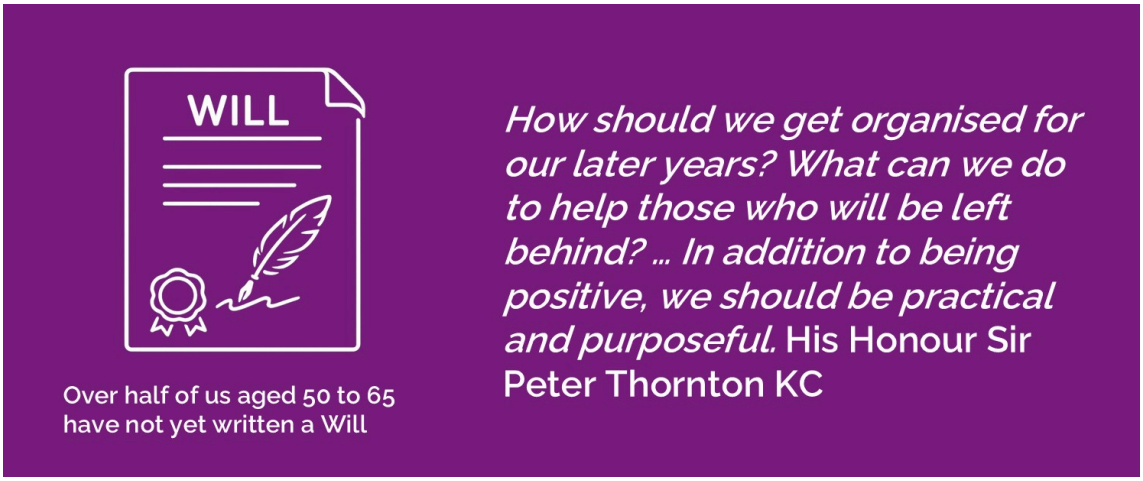
Behavioural science helps explain what makes change stick. The Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), founded by David Halpern, designed a simple framework called EAST – make behaviours easy, attractive, social and timely. In plain terms, people are more likely to keep going when change fits into everyday life, feels normal and happens at the right moment. Small steps, fewer barriers and seeing others do the same thing all make a difference. Living better is less about willpower and more about shaping daily routines and environments so positive choices are easier to stick with for longer.

However, if better sleep is one habit you would like to rethink, refresh or retry this year, join us and our Partner, the University of Surrey Centre of Excellence on Ageing, on **Thursday 15 January 2026** for our lunchtime webinar on sleep and healthy ageing. We will explore why good sleep matters more as we age, what gets in the way and what practical changes really help, drawing on the latest evidence. You can find out more and register here.

We have chosen "rethink, refresh and redo" as the theme for Friday three's regular first feature in 2026. We would like you to let us know via the button below how you might rethink familiar narratives, refresh or reuse ideas or evidence that deserve more attention or suggest ways to redo approaches that are no longer fit for purpose.

GET IN TOUCH

Getting organised - a little life admin goes a long way



Endless small 'life admin' tasks can hang over us and, like failing to keep our New Year's resolutions, can similarly cause stress and anxiety when we put them off or become overwhelmed by them. These jobs – paying bills, sorting insurance, managing appointments or even updating personal details – are what keep our lives running. They may seem mundane, but they absorb real time and mental energy for people of all ages.

We can borrow a great deal from the behavioural science tips in BIT's EAST framework to help make such tasks easier and less of a chore. There are also many column inches and self-help publications offering tips and practical advice. In this week's guest blog, *The Later Years: The simple guide to organising the rest of your life*, His Honour Sir Peter Thornton KC sets out a compelling case for planning ahead and having those important conversations now rather than later. His focus is often associated with later life – wills, powers of attorney and preparing for the end of life – but there are messages here for all of us.

People in Sweden are often more pragmatic about preparing for death and even have a specific word for the life admin around it: döstädning, which literally translates as 'death cleaning'. In his blog – based on his book of the same title – Sir Peter reminds us that with a little preparation, while we are fit and healthy, we can protect our independence, our wishes and the people we care about. But this is not just about preparing for our deaths. Sudden illness, disability or caring responsibilities can affect people at any stage of life. Having systems in place – clear records, shared information and agreed plans – makes life more resilient.

Research from the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS), published last year, shows that 53% of adults aged 50–64 and 22% of those aged 65 and over do not have a will. Without one, as Sir Peter points out, the law may override personal wishes, particularly for unmarried partners. He also highlights the importance of lasting powers of attorney for health and welfare, and for property and financial affairs, alongside advance decisions or statements that set out preferences for care and treatment.

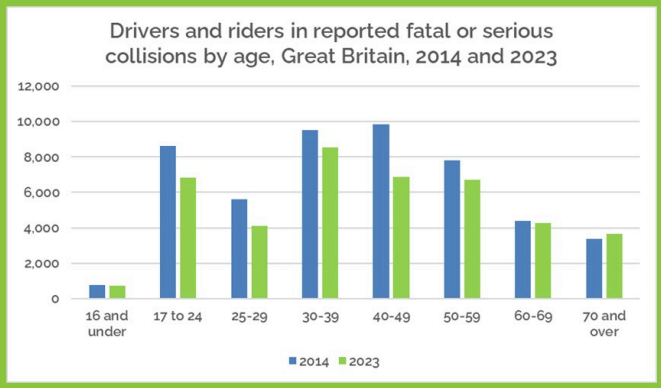
One simple place to start, as Sir Peter suggests, is creating a single, organised file – paper or digital – containing essential information. This might include a will, details of finances and property, insurance policies, NHS and GP contacts and notes on personal wishes. For older people, this can significantly ease the burden on family and friends after death. For younger people, it is simply good admin: knowing where key documents are and how to access them when life changes.

Crucially, organisation should not happen in silence. Sir Peter's blog emphasises the value of conversations with trusted family members about wishes and responsibilities. These discussions are often avoided, but they can reduce uncertainty and conflict later on. And while some of us might have a couple of shoeboxes of old photographs on a shelf somewhere, unless these are properly organised and labelled – and not stuck together – they are likely to generate more questions about your life than answers. Happily, technology means it is becoming easier than ever to store and retrieve our histories as we live through them.

Often, it is getting started that is the hardest part, but as Sir Peter Thornton concludes, 'a little organisation can go a long way'. You can read the full blog via the button below.

Eyes on road safety - will the new strategy deliver for long lives?

It would be ironic if some drivers were pushed off the road by rigid age-based rules while others were forced back into their cars due to an inequitable public transport system under strain… We need joined-up thinking that genuinely supports mobility and choice for everyone across the UK – on and off the road.
David Sinclair, ILC, Jan 2026



Much of the media coverage of the government's newly announced Road Safety Strategy has focused on one proposal in particular: the possibility of mandatory eyesight testing for drivers over 70. It is easy to see why. Being able to continue to drive in later life is a sensitive issue, bound up with independence, identity and access to the things we enjoy.

As David Sinclair, ILC's Chief Executive, commented this week, *"Road safety matters – but age alone is a blunt tool. Age-related eye conditions affect most of us well before 70, so the proposals don't reflect the evidence. If the government wants safer roads, it should focus on proportionate, evidence-based checks that reflect real-world driving – not arbitrary age cut-offs that could strip older people of independence without clear benefit."*

But it is also important to step back and look at the wider picture. This is the first comprehensive road safety strategy in over a decade, and its central ambition – to reduce deaths and serious injuries on Britain's roads by 65% by 2035 – is one few can disagree with. Around four people still die on UK roads every day. Thousands more are seriously injured. Any serious attempt to turn that around deserves careful, constructive engagement rather than reflex opposition.

The strategy, published this week by the Department for Transport (DfT), intends for there to be a clear shift away from the stalled progress of the past decade. It reintroduces casualty reduction targets, embraces the internationally recognised Safe System approach and tackles some of the biggest and most persistent risks on our roads – from drink and drug driving to speeding, mobile phone use and illegal number plates.

There is much here to support. Consulting on lowering the drink drive limit, unchanged since 1967, brings England and Wales closer to international best practice. Exploring the use of alcohol interlock devices for repeat offenders could prevent harm before it happens. Stronger vehicle safety standards, a new Road Safety Investigation Branch and a renewed focus on young drivers, motorcyclists and children in deprived areas all point to a more systemic, prevention-focused approach.

Where older drivers are concerned, the government has been clear that proposals on eyesight testing and potential cognitive screening will be consulted on. As our blog, published in August 2025, highlights the evidence base is nuanced. While serious injury and fatality rates per mile do rise in later life, many drivers over 70 are safe, cautious and experienced. Age-related changes in vision and cognition do not begin at a single birthday, and starting policy at a fixed age risks being arbitrary rather than effective. It is important that the DfT gets this right and introduces proportionate, outcome-based checks that genuinely improve safety without unfairly undermining mobility. You can access and respond to this consultation here up until the 31 March 2026 deadline.

Crucially, road safety policy does not exist in a vacuum. If people are discouraged or prevented from driving, the alternatives need to be credible. That means public transport that is affordable, reliable and accessible, and streets that support active travel for people of all ages. There is a real risk of mixed messages if tougher rules for drivers sit alongside a public transport system under financial strain, or uncertainty over concessionary travel such as London's Freedom Pass.

Done well, this strategy could save thousands of lives and reduce pressure on the NHS, while still supporting independence across the life course. But its success will depend on joined-up thinking – recognising that safety, mobility and inclusion are not competing goals, but mutually reinforcing ones.

READ MORE

The Friday three newsletter, edited by Emily Evans, is usually sent out fortnightly.

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