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Festival of connection, creativity and ageing well aims to inspire communities

Thursday 1 October to Sunday 18 October 2026

Plans are coming together for York 50+ festival dedicated to connection, creativity and ageing well in later life. The festival is a celebration of York's vibrant community - a chance to challenge ageism and shine a spotlight on the energy, creativity, and incredible contributions of older people.

We've already secured more than **80 exciting event entries**, showcasing a fantastic range of activities across four key categories: Sports and Active Leisure, Information and Advice, Social Activity and Learning, and Creative and Culture.

What's new this year?

Get ready to join our **Mad Hatters March on Saturday 3 October**. We're inviting everyone to don their favourite hat and become part of the fun. For an extra creative twist, decorate your hat with a leaf to celebrate our leaf-themed logo. Whether it's bold, quirky or beautifully handcrafted, we can't wait to see your leafy creations bring the march to life!

New for this year are a series of special **Friendship Lunches** taking place at The Chopping Block - a charming French bistro on the bustling Walmgate, on 24 September, 8 and 15 October from 1.00-2.30pm. This links the York 50+ festival to the renowned York Food Festival of which Michael Hjort, joint owner of The Chopping Block is the Festival Director. Join us for great food, friendly conversation and the chance to meet new people over a delicious two-course meal for just £15. In order to book a place, simply ring the venue on 01904 629222 and quote 50+ festival.

Also new this year is our **Information Fair on Tuesday 6 October**, 10.00am-12.00pm at York Theatre Royal for a morning packed with useful information, advice and opportunities. The fair will bring together a range of organisations offering support,



guidance and inspiration across a variety of topics, providing a great opportunity to discover what's available, ask questions, connect with local services and perhaps share a coffee with theatre goers.

Bob Towner Lecture

We are delighted to welcome **Professor Alan Walker CBE**, Emeritus Professor of Social Policy & Social Gerontology at the University of Sheffield, for a special lecture celebrating the legacy of the remarkable Bob Towner - a passionate champion for the rights of older people. The evening will explore the important topic: **“Creating an age-friendly society – realising the right to age well”** and takes place on Thursday 1 October 17.30-20.00 at York St John University, Creative Centre.

In his first year as **Chair of YOPA, Matthew Knight** said *“Last year’s festival made a real impact, praised as a ‘wonderfully inclusive’ celebration that truly embraced people of all ages and generations. This year, we’ve added some brand new activities and we’re calling on everyone to come together once again, share that same enthusiasm and help us create another unforgettable celebration of connection, creativity and ageing well.”*

Carl Wain, Deputy Chief Executive, Age UK York added *“The festival encourages as many people as possible to get involved. Whether you’re looking to discover new passions, try something different, meet new people or simply enjoy spending time with others. It’s about celebrating curiosity and creativity as well as encouraging people to Act Now, Age Better through the city’s wonderful range of physical activities.”*

Michael Hjort, Festival Director, York Food & Drink Festival said *“We’re delighted that the Food Festival which runs 18-27 September and the 50+ Festival are joining forces to create an even more welcoming event for older members of our community. It’s a wonderful opportunity for people who may not usually go out to eat on their own to enjoy great food, meet others and be part of the community.”*

Celebrating International Day of Older People

The festival embraces the UN designated International Day of Older People (IDOP), with a Day of Celebration and Central Parade in York on Saturday 3 October. IDOP day celebrates the rich cultural and caring contributions of elders to our diverse communities and encourages intergenerational connectivity.

PROGRAMME

York 50+ Festival: International Day of Older People Celebration Saturday 3 October

10.00-15.30	Music Performances including Abi and Charlotte from Musical Connections, Nicola Betts choir and Vanessa Simmons on piano. Rotary Ainsty support point and brochure distributors from University of York students	St Helen's Square
12.30-13.00	Convene for the parade and bring your best hat for the Mad Hatter March. IDOP celebratory tree in situ created by Knavesmire Kool Kids club.	York Theatre Royal
13.00-13.45	Grand Parade of elders and friends - heralded by Town Cryer, stewarded by York St John students. All welcome to join in and share a musical moment in the Gardens at 13.15 and cheer the Parade.	Museum Gardens
13.45-14.15	Mayoral greeting and a tribute to our elders. A creative happening takes place with music and laughter.	St Helen's Square
14.30-17.00	Celebration continues with refreshments	St Sampson's Centre, Church Street

Next steps

- Save the dates
 - Thursday 1 October 17.30-20.00 – Bob Towner Lecture
 - Saturday 3 October - York 50+ day of celebration with parade from 13.00
 - Tuesday 6 October, 10.00–12.00 - Information Fair
- Get involved by:
 - Run an event - Although the deadline for inclusion in our printed programme has now passed you can feature your event in our online programme.
 - Spreading the word
 - Volunteering
 - Sponsorship – [see pack](#) of options
 - Catch up on last year's festival [here](#)

Have a question - Call us on **07965 246193** or email us yorkfiftyplus@gmail.com
Find out more <https://www.yorkassembly.org.uk/50-festival-26/>

For latest updates, follow us on



Ends



About YOPA

York Older People's Assembly (YOPA) is an independent local charity which has advocated for, celebrated and supported older people across York and North Yorkshire since 2001. We are an organisation of older people, for older people and we work to achieve full citizenship for diverse older people across and within the wider community.

We aim to:

- Represent the views of older people in York to decision makers locally and nationally.
- Inform older people about services that are available.
- Identify where needs are not being met.
- Work with the local authority and others to make York an age-friendly city

As part of the 50+ Festival, this is the third year in which YOPA has successfully led a city-wide collaborative for International Day of Older People.

About Age UK York

Age UK York is an independent local charity which has been working in the local community to help older people for over 50 years. We have 100 dedicated staff and over 400 volunteers helping us to deliver services and activities for older people in York. Age UK York provides free, confidential and impartial information and advice on a range of issues relating to older people and those who care for and support them.

We offer a wide range of services to older people in York to enable them to live better lives. This includes information and advice, benefits and money advice, befriending services, carer respite service, Day Clubs and Home From Hospital support. All our work is aimed at improving the lives of older people in York. Age UK York encourages older people to speak out about local and national issues. We are here to make more of life in York.

About the International Day of Older People

Each year on October 1, people across the world mark United Nations International Day of Older People to raise awareness of opportunities and challenges faced by ageing populations, and to mobilise the wider community to address challenges faced by older people. The theme for 2025, is the role older people play in creating resilient, sustainable societies.



Carl Wain, Deputy CEO, Age UK York



Matthew Knight, Chair, YOPA