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An unforgettable 50+ Festival parade full of colour, joy and celebration

Thursday 1 October to Sunday 18 October 2026

The streets of York came alive on Saturday 3 October as the York 50+ Festival brought together nearly 100 paraders, young and old, for a spectacular parade to remember.

The highlight of the festival, the grand parade was a vibrant day of celebration, connection and happiness, marking the **International Day of Older People**. The day commenced with the amazing Nicola Betts with the York Wellbeing Choir in St Helen's Square with the trusted York Rotary Ainsty support point. Our colourful **Mad Hatters-themed parade**, heralded by the Town Crier and stewarded by University of York students, stopped off at the York Museum Gardens for a musical interlude by the wonderful Musical Connections choir, before arriving at St Helen's Square where we had a special Mayoral greeting and tribute to our elders, finishing with a well earned cuppa at St Sampson's Centre.

Addressing the Grand Parade, **the Lord Mayor Councillor Margaret Wells** expressed "On behalf of the city of York it is my honour and privilege as your Lord Mayor to extend the warmest of welcome to the 21st annual York 50+ Festival grand parade. When people look around this square today, they will see they are not just surrounded by ancient stone, but by the vibrant, pulsing life and energy that you have brought through our streets.

You've raised our spirits, so congratulations - you have completely transformed the heart of York today. You have filled York with colour, music and something even better – an unmistakable sense of fun. As we mark the International Day of Older People this week, your parade is a powerful, living demonstration of what it means to age well, to stay connected and what is it like to live with boundless creativity and fun."



Dianne Willcocks, Vice Chair, YOPA added “What a glorious sun-filled day. I loved the joy and generosity created by performers and participants alike. And we won so many new friends as the Mad Hatters parade took our ‘positive ageing’ messages through the city. The photos will show that we won support from all ages and all sections of our community - including, importantly, the wonderful validating words of our Lord Mayor. A good day for York!”

Carl Wain, Deputy Chief Executive, Age UK York reflected “Festivals like this are important because they provide an opportunity to raise the profile of older people and celebrate positivity, fun and inclusion, while helping to challenge some of the stereotypes associated with ageing. They also create an opportunity for people to socialise, come together and connect around a shared theme. At its heart, it’s about challenging ageism and creating spaces where people can feel included, valued and able to have a good time.”

The streets were buzzing with people, colour and celebration. Here’s what some of the participants had to say:

- We’re involved in the festival because it shows we’re not dead yet!
- This festival shows we’re still capable.
- It’s a beautiful celebration of the generations and it’s important. We wouldn’t be here without those who came before us.
- It’s great to see people coming together, bringing the streets to life, showing how much goes on, especially musically, across the city of York.
- The 50+ festival shines a spotlight on older people’s involvement and activity which isn’t always obvious, so it’s great to have them at the centre of things.
- I want to help and give something back to YOPA and Age UK York, supporting older people in York is so important.
- We can do joyful, happy things. We’re just so fortunate to live in York where there is so much going on



- Events like this keep me alive and kicking.

The fun continues until Sunday 18 October. See our full programme [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

Contact ali@hornseyconsulting.co.uk for individual photos









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.

