Hats off to an unforgettable York 50+ Festival

York 50+ Festival celebration event held on 17 October 2026 at Patch – a selection of photos and quotes



Rachael, Margaret, Carl, Jessica, Dianne

Charlotte Yeandell, Musical Connections Choir
The Festival is a wonderful celebration of community and really highlights the strength and spirit of the community in York. The sunny afternoon in the Museum Gardens created such a lovely buzz, and as a charity based in York, it was a real pleasure to share what we do with people passing by. The parade was a fantastic way to capture people's attention and draw in those who may not have known much about the Festival, giving them the opportunity to discover more and feel part of the occasion.



Stan, Charlotte, Robert and Louise

Musical Connections - Rolling Tones Choir
We were so grateful to be joined by the Musical Connections Rolling Tones choir at our closing celebration, who treated us to a wonderful selection of songs, including the African welcome song Funga Alafia, a Canadian folk song, On Ilkley Moor Baht 'at, Cat Stevens' Moonshadow and the gospel favourite Down in My Soul. It was a joyful reminder of the power of music to lift spirits, bring people together and make us feel good.

Robert, choir member
We sing in schools and nursing homes and I love meeting people and having a good time.
Stan, choir member
I'm 90 and 1 month and I enjoy singing. It makes you want to dance.

Age UK York Trustee, Louise Leach
It's a wonderful festival, and my connection with Age UK York is very personal. I became a Trustee because my father is living with advanced dementia, and this was the organisation that all the other agencies signposted me to for support. The Tuesday luncheon club is truly amazing and has meant so much to us. It's been a five-year journey, and although my father is now living in a care home, I remain incredibly grateful for the support, kindness and community that Age UK York provides.

Councillor Margaret Wells, The Lord Mayor of York



Margaret

Every second, two people somewhere in the world celebrate their 60th birthday. By 2030, just three years from now, more than 16% of the global population will be over 60.

Some people worry about ageing, but not me - not here, and certainly not with you!

Ageing is about turning the page to a new chapter, embracing new opportunities and continuing to live life to the fullest. I've discovered tai chi and really enjoyed trying new things, reminding me that there's always something new to learn and experience.

Thank you and just think, while I've been speaking, another eight people somewhere in the world have turned 60. Let's celebrate every one of them!



Donna and Dianne

Donna Smith, Interim Membership Services Director, University of York Students' Union

The 50+ Festival is a wonderful celebration of community, bringing together people from all walks of life who might not otherwise meet and creating a real sense of connection and belonging.

Matthew Knight, Chair YOPA and chair of the 50+ Festival organising committee

As we celebrate our 21st Festival, tonight gives us a wonderful opportunity to reflect and recognise everything we have achieved over the past 18 days.



Matthew, tree by Knavesmire Cool Kids

At its heart, the 50+ Festival is about bringing people together, creating connections, trying something new and celebrating everything our community has to offer.

None of this would be possible without the generosity and support of our sponsors, to whom we extend our heartfelt thanks. Your support helps make the Festival such a special and meaningful celebration for our whole city.

It would be invidious to name individuals without risking leaving someone out, but I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks in particular, to Caroline at Age UK York, who took on so many tasks, including producing our wonderful programme; Ali Rogan our communications whizz, who can seemingly turn minutes around in seconds; Carl Wain who has supported us in every possible way; and, of course, the indefatigable Dianne Willcocks who never accepts that anything is impossible. Their enthusiasm, commitment and willingness to go the extra mile have been invaluable, and I am hugely grateful to them all.

Carl Wain, Deputy Chief Executive, Age UK York



Carl, Louise and Caroline

It's quite remarkable what YOPA achieves. The organisation is entirely volunteer-led, with a relatively small team making an enormous difference to the lives of people in our community.

I'm particularly passionate about partnership working, so I reached out to organisations specifically involved in supporting older people, and together we've established an older people's group. We also produce a printed newsletter four times a year, recognising that 13% of over-65s don't use IT at all. It's important that we reach people in ways that work for them and ensure they feel informed, included and connected.

The Festival is fantastic, and the Mad Hatter parade has been described as the best ever! Having a theme really helped bring everyone together, and our Age UK York social clubs created some truly wonderful hats. It was also a lovely example of intergenerational working in action, with the tree created by the Knavesmire Cool Kids adding another special dimension to the celebrations. It's these moments of creativity, collaboration and community spirit that make the Festival so special.

Rachael Maskell MP


Rachael

My own mother celebrated her 89th birthday this week, so supporting and celebrating older people is something that feels very close to my heart.

A third of the population in York is over 50, and the Festival is a wonderful way to bring people together, build connections and celebrate all that older people contribute to our community. One of the saddest things is knowing how many older people experience isolation in their own homes. Creating welcoming spaces where people can meet, form friendships and feel part of something is incredibly important.

Life can bring greater challenges as we grow older, and the Festival helps enrich those years by offering opportunities to try new things, discover new interests and develop new skills. Where else but in York could we see such a wonderful celebration of community, connection and possibility?

The commitment you show, simply because you care, is truly remarkable. You are trailblazers, setting the standard for others to follow and opening up vital opportunities for older people. Here in Westminster, we are increasingly recognising the value of everything you bring, as we work towards making this the best country in which to grow old.

Jessica Forsdyke, Business Relations Manager, Clifton Park Hospital, Festival sponsors

We're delighted to sponsor the Festival and recognise the huge amount of work that goes into delivering such a diverse programme. One of its greatest strengths is bringing people together and celebrating our community.



Jessica

As a specialist orthopaedic facility, we support NHS and private patients with a wide range of services, from joint and back care to MRI, physiotherapy and surgery. For us, pain is about more than the symptom itself; it's about what it stops you doing and what matters most to you.

The Festival is a wonderful showcase of everything happening in York and we're proud to be part of it.

George, YOPA

Thanks to Crombie Wilkinson's involvement with the Festival I updated my will in 2022. Another highlight was the wonderful team of stewards from the University of York, who ensured everyone could cross two busy main roads safely. I also think the parade is great, which took us along a route I'd never experienced before, behind the art gallery and into Museum Gardens. It was a lovely way to discover new parts of our city.





Rebecca, YOPA

Hearing the choir sing brought such an incredible sense of joy. The atmosphere was so uplifting and full of energy. Growing older shouldn't mean simply getting old and slowing down; it should be about living life to the fullest, keeping our minds active, staying connected with others, and doing things that lift our spirits and make us feel alive.

Find out more https://www.yorkassembly.org.uk/50-festival-26/