

# PIGEON POST

Keeping you informed & involved  
January/February 2026



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## Hello

Welcome to the first issue of 2026

In December we asked our cookery class regulars about their goals for the months ahead - you can read their responses on page 11. We were really heartened by how many

focused on simply enjoying the moment.

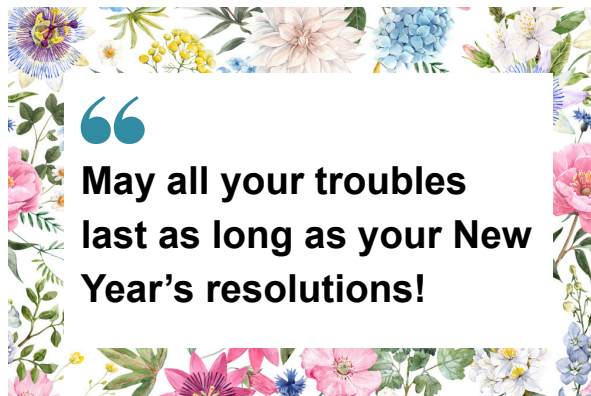
Keeping with the theme of positivity, Professor Catherine Loveday shares her insights into the science of happiness on page 3. While we're all born with a natural baseline, there's plenty we can do to boost our wellbeing.

Getting outdoors, walking more, and connecting with others all make a difference - and Age UK Barnet's activities and walking groups offer the perfect chance to do just that.

As the weather turns colder, don't miss our circulation boosters on page 7 - simple, body-warming moves to help keep you cosy at home without reaching for the thermostat. We hope you enjoy this issue.

Wishing everyone a very Happy New Year.

Helen Newman  
Chief Executive  
Age UK Barnet



“

May all your troubles  
last as long as your New  
Year's resolutions!

Keeping energy levels steady can make a huge difference to how we feel day-to-day - especially as we get older. The good news is that a few smart snack choices can give a real boost. Here are some simple, tasty ideas to help keep you going.

## Quick and Easy Options

- Greek Yogurt: With fruit (berries, banana) or a drizzle of honey for protein and probiotics.
- Nuts & Seeds: A small handful of almonds, walnuts, pumpkin, or sunflower seeds for healthy fats and energy.
- Fruit: A ripe banana (easy to chew) or apple slices with peanut butter.
- Cheese: Cheese cubes or cottage cheese with seeds or fruit.
- Hard-Boiled Eggs: Excellent protein source.
- Whole grain crackers with hummus, cream cheese, or a salmon pate.



## Slightly More Prep

- Smoothies: Blend yogurt, fruit (banana, berries), and a little milk or oats for a nutrient-packed drink.
- Oatmeal or porridge topped with nuts, seeds, or berries for slow-release energy.

## Recipes

### Energy Balls: Made from oats, nut butter, seeds, and dried fruit.

1. Combine rolled oats, pitted dates, nut butter, chia seeds/flax seeds in a food processor.
2. Blend until sticky and forms a ball.
3. Roll into bite-sized balls.
4. Chill in the fridge to firm up, but can be stored at room temp.



### Crunchy chickpeas - protein-packed vegan snack that you can enjoy on the go:

1. Preheat oven to 200°C /180°C fan/gas mark 6.
2. Drain a 400g (14oz) can of chickpeas. Toss with 1 tsp rapeseed oil,
3. 1 tsp paprika, 2 tsp ground cumin and 2 tsp ground coriander.
4. Spread on a baking tray and roast for 35 mins. Shake the tray halfway through. Enjoy 2 tbsp per portion.

### Curried eggs - jazz up a protein-packed hard-boiled egg with a delicious dip:

1. Hard boil an egg.
2. Mix 1 tbsp 0% Greek yogurt, ¼ tsp curry powder, 1/8 tsp garlic powder, ½ tsp lemon juice and ½ tsp mint together in a small dish.
3. Dip the egg, whole or sliced into the mixture and enjoy.

## KEY INGREDIENTS FOR ENERGY BOOSTING SNACKS

**Protein:** Helps with muscle health (yogurt, eggs, cheese, nuts).

**Calcium:** Important for bone strength (yogurt, cheese, fortified cereals).

**Healthy Fats and Fibre:** For sustained energy (nuts, seeds, oily fish, whole grains).

**Hydration:** Pair snacks with water or milk to stay hydrated.



**In a recent talk for Age UK Barnet, neuroscientist Professor Catherine Loveday spilled the beans on the science of happiness...**

Scandinavian countries consistently top global happiness rankings - and nations with greater equality tend to be happier overall. "From an individual perspective, although wealth is linked to increased happiness, after a certain income level (around \$60,000 a year in the US) the benefit plateaus," said Catherine.

She added that happiness shifts across our lifetime, typically dipping in midlife before rising again as we get older and become more likely to recall positive experiences.

Genetics counts - around 30-50 per cent of people are just naturally happier than others. "Some people really do see the world as glass half full or half empty," Catherine explained. "And after good or bad events, most people tend to return to their natural happiness level."

But the good news is this: even if happiness doesn't always come naturally, there's a lot we can do to boost it. The more we work on our circumstances and habits, the less power our genetics have. And remember - no one is happy all the time. Life's ups and downs, and the challenges we overcome, are what give meaning to our lives.



**Here are just a few of Catherine's science-backed tips to improve happiness:**

### 1. Get walking.

Walking benefits mental as well as physical health. Try an "awe walk" - take a photo of something that fills you with wonder. It helps you become more aware and appreciative of the world around you. Walking with someone else brings the added benefits of chatting, connecting and sharing.



### 2. Write it down.

Note three good things that happened that day, or everything you achieved. Writing things down helps you notice and absorb the positive moments.

### 3. Connect with others.

Acts of kindness make a real difference - but volunteering or contributing to a bigger cause has the biggest impact on happiness. It strengthens purpose, meaning and accomplishment. Small gestures count too: a smile, a thank-you, or simply being part of a group boosts connection and wellbeing.



### 4. Find your flow.

Lose yourself in activities you love - playing an instrument, crafting, reading or listening to music. Flow states help us switch off from stress and increase fulfilment.

### 5. Build a bank of happy memories.

By rehearsing positive memories, you train your brain to think more positively. Write them down, keep a diary, or share stories with others. Techniques like the memory palace - linking happy memories to landmarks on a walk, for instance - can be powerful, and have had a positive impact on people with depression.

### 6. Try a memory experiment.

Visualise a place from your past that makes you happy. Picture it in detail and imagine walking around it. Or think of a song that lifts your mood - what memory does it bring back?



### What you will need

Scrap wood, Hammer, Flowers: such as Cosmos, Stock, Petunias, Pansies, Fern.

100% cotton napkins (or other fabric such as a cotton bag)

Wax paper, Embroidery floss (optional)

Alum - (potassium aluminum sulfate, a hydrated double sulfate salt used for centuries in everything from water purification, dyeing fabrics (as a mordant to fix colors). You can buy Alum (Potassium Aluminium Sulphate) online at Amazon UK, specialist spice shops, craft suppliers (for dyeing), or in-person at some supermarkets

### Instructions

Pre-treat your fabric. I used 1:16 ratio of Alum to water and set the fabric in that solution for several hours. Once it had soaked there, I washed it on a rinse only cycle in the washing machine and let it air dry. We used cotton towels and napkins, but you can choose what fabric you would like to use.

#### TO FLATTEN FLOWERS

Take a piece of scrap wood, and lay it on a flat surface.

Lay your fabric on top of the wood and position it so that the wood will be backing where you will be hammering your first flower.

Select the flowers you want to use and arrange them on your pounding material. Ensure the flowers you pick out are vibrantly coloured and have thin petals. Only use the bud of the flower, not any of the stem.

Place your first flower face down onto the fabric. Make sure to spread out each petal so that they are not folded or crumpled.

Place a piece of wax paper over the flower and hold it in place while beginning to hammer.

Hammer from the outside of the petals towards the middle and keep hammering until you see the flower become darker from the pigment lifting – that means that it transferred color onto the fabric.

Make sure that while you hammer the flower stays in the exact same position. Any shifting will show up and make the finished product less crisp.

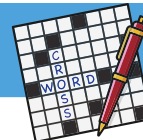
Once you are done hammering, gently lift off the wax paper and brush away any leftover bits from the flower.

Continue hammering flowers all over the fabric until you are content with the layout.

Finally, embellish however you like! Your fabric will be beautiful just as it is, but if you want, you can add some pretty embroidery to your fabric piece, like lazy daisy stitches or French knots!







## SUDOKU

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### Across

- 1 US coin (6)
- 4 Academy awards (6)
- 8 Juliet's lover (5)
- 9 Lake District county (7)
- 10 Somebody else (7)
- 11 Governed (5)
- 12 Making clothes (9)
- 17 Stand-offish (5)
- 19 Ahead (2,5)
- 21 Vacation (7)
- 22 Red-breasted bird (5)
- 23 Puzzling question (6)
- 24 Cure (6)

### Down

- 1 Scandinavian country (6)
- 2 Ease (7)
- 3 Historical era (5)
- 5 Japanese warrior (7)
- 6 Spring month (5)
- 7 Beer and lemonade mixture (6)
- 9 Inquisitiveness (9)
- 13 Unbeliever (7)
- 14 Farewell (7)
- 15 Assemble (6)
- 16 Mean, ungenerous (6)
- 18 Lubricated (5)
- 20 Coercion (5)

## RIDDLES

1. "He has married many women but never been married. Who is he?"
2. "My life is often a volume of grief; your help is needed to turn a new leaf. Stiff is my spine and my body is pale, but I'm always ready to tell a tale."
3. "I have an eye but cannot see. Turn me on my side and I am everything. Cut me in half and I am nothing."
4. "You answer me although I never ask you questions. What am I?"
5. "Take one out and scratch my head, I am now black but once was red. What am I?"

## CROSSWORD

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Cooking for one doesn't have to mean 'beans on toast' for dinner. A meal for one should be just as special as a meal for more, says dietitian Caroline Morrison. "Being smart with your shopping and cooking means you can save time, money and have a tasty, nutritious and enjoyable meal by cooking from scratch," she says.

Some people lose the enthusiasm for cooking when living alone, particularly if they were used to cooking for a family or partner. If you can identify with this, it is time to consider eating alone as a treat. Quick and easy dinners for one include stir fries, jacket potatoes with topping, pasta based dishes, risottos and omelettes.

To save time and money to enable you to have your own, homemade ready-meals, try batch cooking and freezing portions.

Save plastic tubs, foil boxes, plastic bags and clingfilm to freeze food in. You don't need to spend money on expensive boxes - you can wash out food containers such as margarine or ice cream tubs. Ensure they are safe to use in the microwave if you're planning to heat up this way.

Most dishes keep well in the fridge for a couple of days too.

## Bolognese basics

Foundation dishes using mincemeat or quorn mince can be used as a jacket potato topping, chilli con carne or cottage pie. This basic mince recipe can be adapted for any of these dishes by adding carrots, celery, kidney beans, or whatever you fancy.

### Ingredients

1 onion  
1 clove garlic  
1 x 15ml spoon vegetable oil  
400g lean minced beef  
1 x 400g can chopped tomatoes  
½ x 5ml spoon mixed dried herbs OR oregano  
1 x reduced-salt beef stock cube  
Black pepper (optional)  
Olive oil



### Method

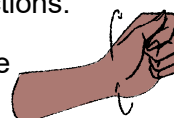
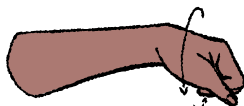
1. Peel and finely chop the onion and garlic.
2. Measure 100ml of boiling water into the measuring jug.
3. Turn the hob to a medium heat and heat the olive oil in one of the saucepans.
4. Add the onion and cook for 3 minutes until softened, stirring all the time.
5. Add the garlic and oregano and cook for a further minute. Keep stirring!
6. Add the mince and stir, breaking up the mince with a wooden spoon, until it becomes completely brown.
7. Open the can of chopped tomatoes and add to the saucepan.
8. Stir until the meat mixture is beginning to bubble then reduce the heat and simmer (small bubbles) for 10-15 minutes to allow the sauce to reduce and thicken.
9. Continue to simmer the sauce for a further 10-15 minutes.
10. Add more hot water if the sauce becomes too thick and add black pepper to taste (if using).

**Happy cooking and eating!**

**Keep warm at home without turning up the thermostat with these body warming moves which you can perform while sitting at the kitchen table or while watching TV.**

**1. Ankle and wrist rotations:** this exercise maximises blood flow to the very end of your body, reducing cold and numbness.

- Sit comfortably in a chair. Lift one foot up slightly.
- Slowly rotate your ankle in a circular motion. After 10 circles, switch directions.
- Repeat with the other foot.
- Hold your hand out in front of you and slowly rotate your wrist in the same circular motion.
- After 10 circles, switch directions.
- Repeat with your other hand.



**2. Hip circles:** this exercise activates your hip joint muscles, enhancing circulation in your lower body.

- Sit upright in a chair, with your feet slightly wider than hip-width.
- Lift one knee a few inches, use it to draw slow circles outwards.
- After 5 rotations, switch directions.
- Repeat for your other leg, trying to keep your movements as smooth and controlled.

**3. Knee hugs:** this exercise stretches your hip muscles and stimulates blood flow through your thighs, helping to relieve stiffness.

- Sit upright and bring one knee towards your chest, hugging it with your arms.
- Hold for a few seconds, then release and switch to the other leg.
- Repeat this sequence 5 times.

**4. Fast feet:** This rapid movement pumps blood back to your heart, giving your circulation another boost!

- Sit upright in your chair, lift your heels off the floor so you're resting on the balls of your feet.
- Quickly tap your heels up and down, alternating your feet as if you're running on the spot.
- Do this for 10 seconds, then rest for 5. Repeat at least 5 more times.

Get up slowly – and now the kettle's boiled, enjoy a hot drink!

## EVENTS

### Talk: Music and Emotions 28 January 2026 (6.45pm-8pm)

Why does music give us goosebumps? Why can sad songs make us feel better? And why do some people simply not enjoy music at all? In this fascinating talk, Professor Catherine Loveday will explore the deep connection between music and our emotions. Takes place at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT. Free but donations welcome. Open to all. To register, email [teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk](mailto:teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk) or call 07502 989 403

**Monthly bingo** on Fridays. A chance to have fun, enjoy some friendly competition, and connect with others at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane N2 8LT from 2-3pm. Next dates for 2026 are:- January 30, February 27, March 27, May 1, May 29, June 26, July 24, August 21, September 18, October 16, November 13 and December 11. £3 donation. Fancy lunch too? Join us at our lunch club earlier at 12.45pm for a delicious home cooked two course meal - for only £8. To book your place for the lunch club (which also takes place every Friday), please call 020 8203 5040 or email [activities@ageukbarnet.org.uk](mailto:activities@ageukbarnet.org.uk) Resumes on 9 January 2026

**NEW Drop in Pop Up Café** at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT. 10.30-12 noon. Free fresh pastries, coffee and tea beginning 31 January 2026, then on 28 February and 28 March 2026. FREE but donations welcome. No need to book just turn up!

**COFFEE MORNINGS:** Join us for a cuppa and a friendly chat at one of our new coffee mornings which are held between 10.30am to 12 noon around the borough.

**Lane End Medical Centre**, 2 Penshurst Gardens, Edgware HA8 9GJ. Wednesdays: 21 January - Help with NHS app, 18 February, 18 March, 15 April

**Kingsley Court**, Tayside Drive, Edgware HA8 8RE. Wednesdays: 28 January 2026, 25 February, 25 March, 29 April

**Orchard House**, Hampstead Way, Temple Fortune, NW11 6YN - 8 January 2026, 12 March, 15 April  
For more details about the next coffee morning dates, call Tamara on 0208 1297619 or email [activities@ageukbarnet.org.uk](mailto:activities@ageukbarnet.org.uk)

**Cooking with Confidence - Cookery class with lunch.** Monday morning from 11am-1.30pm at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT. 12 Jan 2026 – Melt in your mouth stuffed cabbage leaves, 19 Jan – Chocolate pudding, 26 Jan – Flavours of Morocco, 2 Feb – Flavours of Greece. Vegetarian option available. £32 if booked and paid for in advance. To book contact Tamara on 020 8129 7619 or email [tamara.kocsubej@ageukbarnet.org.uk](mailto:tamara.kocsubej@ageukbarnet.org.uk)



**Each month former journalist Ed Newman has a lovely chat with a Barnet resident and shares their story with the rest of us This time, Ed chats with Hilary about overcoming sexism in the 70s and carving out a remarkable career at the very top of British theatre.**

If at first you don't succeed, try, try and try again. That was the life lesson Hilary learned when she was finally appointed head of scenic painting at the National Theatre back in the 1980s. Twice before she'd been interviewed but was unsuccessful. It was only when the job became vacant for a third time that she finally secured the position.

"I really didn't think I'd get the job," Hilary tells Pigeon Post. "Even when they offered it to me at the third time of asking, I couldn't stop myself from saying I would have to think about it because I'd got so many other jobs stacked up. In the end though, I stayed for 27 years painting and preparing hundreds of sets in that time. People thought I'd been there forever. I always told students not to worry if they didn't get a job because it took me three times. You've just got to keep going."

"Back in the early 1970s, I was looking for an assistant designer job but a lot of the adverts said men only. I got really fed up with that and applied anyway, thinking Hilary could be a man's name as well. Occasionally, I'd get an interview but when I turned up they'd say 'go away'. They thought women were unreliable, emotional and hysterical and that they would get married and then pregnant.

"They also thought that women weren't strong enough and couldn't be left alone to do all-night paint jobs. Then again, not all men were that strong and they shouldn't be left on their own either. I did once have an accident when working on my own. All night I'd been dragging a heavy ladder across the stage to paint different things. Then, I had just one last little bit to do and thought I'm not going to move that ladder again. So, I stood on a stool instead but must have put my weight to one side, it flipped me and I somersaulted on to the stage floor. I remember lying there at 4am and thinking the cleaners won't come until 6.30am. I could really feel the pain. Thankfully, I was just badly bruised but it had been a very dangerous thing to do."



Hilary today

Hilary, now a resident of New Ground Cohousing in Barnet, was brought up in the 1950s by her grandparents in Tottenham. She never knew her father and her mother was travelling the world in her work for The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. School was never easy for Hilary because she struggled with dyslexia but she made up for that with her creative and artistic skills, which she inherited from her grandmother.

"She was a dressmaker and she made and cooked everything," Hilary continues. "It was pretty bleak at that time in Tottenham with bombsites at the end of the road. I was lucky to have my grandparents around while my mum was off working in various places. Dyslexia meant I didn't enjoy school very much. They knew I wasn't stupid but they couldn't understand why I couldn't write and spell very well."

"When I was eleven, I moved to Ascot with my mum. The girls there thought I must be posh because of my double-barrelled name and asked me how many horses I had. But the only horse I knew belonged to the rag and bone man because I was a working-class girl from Tottenham."

After doing A levels in art, zoology and botany, Hilary moved on to art college where she learned all the skills she needed to work backstage – design, painting, prop making and costumes. She also worked part-time for a prop maker before starting her career in the theatre.



Hilary Vernon-Smith,  
formerly head scenic artist  
at the National Theatre



During her many years at the National Theatre, Hilary developed a reputation for being an excellent problem solver who was good in a crisis.

"It was my job to be the calm one in any situation," says Hilary. "The theatre can be a dangerous place with a lot of people to keep safe so as a Head of Department you can't panic. The same applied when we were in a race against time to get a job finished. People would say how are we going to get this done and I'd say that's my problem, you just paint."

"The closest we ever came to not getting it done was a show in the Olivier Theatre at the National when we were in the studio painting when they were still building the set. It was the weekend of Princess Diana's funeral, which was just about the most depressing thing you could have on the radio when you're trying to finish a job."

Most actors would be unaware of such problems but one who did show an interest in backstage matters was Dame Judi Dench.

"Unlike most actors, Judi had painted scenery in Rep when she was young so she had quite a connection with painters. She'd often visit the studio and she'd always appreciate what we were doing. It was always good to see her and she was absolutely lovely, as was another wonderful actor, Fiona Shaw."

Hilary eventually decided it was time to call it a day at the National after 27 years of making sure sets were ready for opening night. She then spent a year teaching in Hong Kong, passing on her skills to enthusiastic students before returning to London to move into New Ground.

She's an active member of the management committee there as well as continuing with her own art. Last summer, she had one of her pieces hung at the prestigious Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy and now she's working on a project about ageing.

"I decided I wanted to do something on the subject because I'm surrounded by it here at New Ground and I'm ageing myself," says Hilary. "It's quite tricky because if you go to a gallery, there are lots of pictures of beautiful young women but age is not well represented, although Rembrandt did it very well."

"What I'm doing is portraits of people's hands because they show age so well. They are very important to all of us and I want to show how they are used by people throughout their lives. I'm hoping to do ten big pictures and then find somewhere to exhibit them."

So, it seems that even in retirement Hilary still has the same motto for life – the show must go on!

**After more than 25 years working as Head Scenic Artist at the National Theatre in London, Hilary Vernon-Smith now makes work to share her own stories. She is currently exploring memories of childhood, including living with her grandparents in a small terraced house in Tottenham, and the complex relationship between her mother and father (who she never met), through their letters of correspondence, which she uncovered after her mother's death.**



## SCAMS UPDATE

According to Which?, scam calls using artificial intelligence (AI) to create or manipulate the caller's voice were among the most common scams reported in 2025. A survey by Hiya, a spam call protection company, found that a quarter of scam calls in the UK were powered by AI.

These scams often involve AI voices pretending to be police officers, bank staff or HMRC employees, Amazon representatives or callers offering bogus phone deals



### HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- ▶ Pause before responding: If a call is unexpected, don't feel pressured to act quickly.
- ▶ Never share personal details: Don't give out bank information, passwords, or account numbers over the phone.
- ▶ Verify the caller: Hang up and call back using the official number from your bank, HMRC, or the company's website.
- ▶ Be wary of payment requests: Genuine organisations will never ask you to transfer money or pay in unusual ways (like gift cards).
- ▶ Use call blocking tools: Many phones and providers offer free spam blocking services.
- ▶ Report suspicious calls: You can report scams to Action Fraud or share them via the Which? scam sharer tool.

**How we can help:**

**Our scams awareness team can help protect you against scams – give them a ring on 0208 129 7615 or 0208 129 7627. And our digital support sessions help people stay safe online. Phone Howard on 0208 432 1415.**

## REPURPOSING CHRISTMAS BITS & BOBS AND UNWANTED PRESENTS!

**Now that the festive season is behind us, we can now tell what gifts we really love and use – and what may be destined for the charity shop (or bin). But think before you chuck! Here are some ways to tackle waste, save money, and even shift some unwanted gifts...**



### Repurposed Christmas Cards

Don't throw away your Christmas cards – you can get (very) ahead of next year's Christmas wrapping with a quick craft project: Turn old Christmas cards into beautiful gift tags by cutting around your favourite designs into simple tag. Then punch a hole near the top and thread a scrap of ribbon through to finish your gift tag!

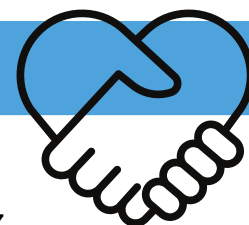
You could also upcycle your cards into festive garlands, ornaments or even bookmarks with this technique. This is a great way to reduce waste while making something functional and beautiful!

**Swap your Books** - Been gifted a book you've already read? Visit one of the many book swaps around the borough: High Barnet, Totteridge & Whetstone, and East Finchley tube stations all have a shelf to exchange your books. Remember to replace as many books as you take to keep the cycle going. There is also a free bookshop that relies on donations in Barnet Spires, a great way to swap one book for another.

**Mug up!** Repurpose unwanted or chipped mugs as plant pots, pen holders, or organisers.

**Pass the Parcel!** Donating or regifting an unwanted present is better than letting it collect dust or go to waste – just be careful about it! Here at Age UK Barnet we always welcome your unwanted gifts for potential raffle prizes – If you have something to donate, call Teresa on 07502 989403.





- For advice about benefits, grants, housing and money concerns, phone our **Later Life Planning Service** on 020 8432 1417.
- For scams advice and support, call our **Scams Prevention Service** on 0208 432 2217.
- If you can't get out without help and would enjoy a regular chat with a friendly volunteer, try our **Befriending Service** on 020 8432 1416
- Unable to get out to the shops and cannot shop online? We have a **Shopping Service\*** for people who need a light weekly shop. For more info, Tel 020 8150 0963
- **Living Well Dementia Hub**—**dementia adviser service** and **day clubs\*** for people living with mild to moderate dementia and their carers. Phone 020 8203 5040. Our **Dementia Befriending Service** offers companionship—phone 020 8150 0967.
- Our **Stepping Out Service** for those who have early stages of dementia or confirmed memory issues, we offer short weekly walks with a volunteer. Phone 020 8150 0963.
- **Foot care\*** We offer basic nail-cutting (£15) at the Ann Owens Centre in East Finchley and, for people with diabetes, taking steroids or warfarin, we have nailcutting with a podiatrist (£20). For an appointment, phone 020 8203 5040.
- **Advice clinics at Chipping Barnet Library** - 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month. The Age UK Barnet advice team will be giving benefit checks, pension credit checks and winter fuel payment advice. Drop in from 10am-1pm and bookable appointments in the afternoon (you need to book during the morning drop in). Speed up the process by bringing rent, service charge and bank statements. Takes place at Chipping Barnet Library, 3 Stapylton Rd, Barnet EN5 4QT
- **Advice Clinic Burnt Oak Library**, 99 Watling Ave, Burnt Oak HA8 0UB - 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays of the month. The clinics are open from 10am-1pm and 2-4pm. To book an appointment, please call us on 0208 432 1417 or email us at [laterlifeplanners@ageukbarnet.org.uk](mailto:laterlifeplanners@ageukbarnet.org.uk)
- For essential jobs in the home please phone our **Handyperson Service\*** on 020 8150 0963. Some jobs such as changing a lightbulb are free of charge.

\*There is a charge for this service

## WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR 2026

We asked a few of our cookery class goers about their aims for next year

I want to stay in good health, keep on coming to my cookery classes

Forget the past, every day is a new beginning

I've achieved everything I want to achieve – now every day is a present.

Keep going out and coming along to activities

I just want to make it to the following year!

I want to keep enjoying the moment. Today is a gift and I want to enjoy every day.

**Writer Lee Janogly, an 86 year old semi-retired fitness instructor and author, shares the conversational highlights of her regular meet-ups with a group of good friends. This time one friend looks back on life as a doctor's wife in the days when the family living room often doubled as the waiting room.**



"I phoned on the dot of 8.00am," grumbled my friend Laila, 'so how come I was number 23 in the queue?' We all nodded at the familiar story, "Honestly," she went on, "by the time I get to see a doctor, I'll be better!"

Gloria agreed with Laila, "You've really got to shop around for a decent MRI nowadays."

We all looked at Barbara who was married to a doctor for 56 years and she shrugged, "What can you do?" We had gathered at her house for our usual Wednesday natter. She had made cinnamon buns (no, neither do I) instead of her usual Apricot Surprise cake - the surprise being that she forgot to add the apricots.

"It was so different when we first got married," said Barbara. "There were no Group Practices, so Paul set up his surgery in our front room with a brass plate on the wall outside. He would visit patients every morning and hold a surgery between 5.00 and 7.00 in the evenings. Patients just used to turn up."

"It must have been strange having people in your house every day," said Nancy.

"It was," said Barbara. "We set up chairs in the hall as a waiting area, but the walls were so thin, little snippets of conversations came through, so everyone could hear things like: 'It can't be a sexually transmitted disease, doctor, I'm happily married!' or 'I've no idea how that got stuck up there!'"

"You must have known all the patients by name," said Sheila.

"Oh yes, some of them were regulars. One elderly lady called Muriel would turn up every few days complaining that the medication Paul gave her wasn't working and could she have some of those blue tablets that worked for her friend. Or she had a chest infection and demanded another course of antibioloocks."

"That must have been fun," said Gloria, "I always fancied being a doctor's wife."

"Are you kidding?" exclaimed Barbara. "I was receptionist, nursemaid and shoulder-to-cry-on! One time the NHS sent round a compulsory notice to be put up in all GP surgeries which stated: 'No dogs allowed in the surgery, except guide dogs' - which was a bit daft as our Yorkshire terrier loved greeting the patients. Of course someone wrote underneath,

"'Why? Dogs are much nicer than people.' Soon there was a new one every day:

"'What about my pussy?'

"'Can I bring my cockerel; I'm very attached to it'

"'I've got a grey beaver'.

" – so before we had a whole menagerie, I took the notice down and threw it away. Nobody died. I was so relieved when we moved, and Paul joined a Group Practice."

Laila was still complaining about her health and said she kept seeing a black, floaty thing in front of her eye that moved wherever she looked, and it was driving her mad.

I said, "Have you seen a doctor?" and she said. "No, only a black, floaty thing." Fine!



**Lee's very funny book 'Getting Old, Deal with It' is published by Mensch Publishing.**







To how it might look in the future!



Christmas is over. The turkey is but a distant memory, the Quality Street tin contains nothing but the toffees, and as we embrace the New Year, it can only mean one thing: our gardening columnist Kevin says it's time to venture back out into The Garden- that mysterious green realm we haven't visited since for so long now.



Let's be honest - most of us are itching to get back out in the garden or on the allotment, even if the weather seems determined to stop us.

Of course, there are limits to what can realistically be achieved at this time of year. The ground is often too wet or frozen to dig and, although the daylight hours are increasing ever so slowly, it can be tricky to get much done outside. Still, there's always something useful to keep us busy - and occasionally even productive.

Now is a good time to begin prepping your garden borders and allotment beds for the season ahead. Spreading a generous layer of well-rotted manure or good-quality organic compost around shrubs and on vegetable plots now gives it time to break down and enrich the soil before spring. As an added bonus, it also warms you up and helps burn off the Christmas calories.

After as little as ten minutes of genuine effort, you definitely deserve a hot drink - and the chance to stare proudly out of the window at your now slightly less chaotic garden. While telling yourself it looks "much better already." Well done, you are now a post-Christmas gardening champion.

## And Remember...

January gardening isn't about perfection. It's about showing up, doing what you can, and convincing yourself that spring definitely won't catch you unprepared again this year.

## Post-Christmas Jobs to Tackle in the Garden for January/February

### Dispose of the Christmas Tree

Yes, the council will collect it, but don't waste those needles. The bucketful that fell off at the slightest touch makes an excellent mulch for acid-loving plants such as Camellias.

### Pruning

January is the perfect time to prune many woody shrubs and fruit trees. A little trim now tidies them up, brings them under control, and lets the neighbours think you know exactly what you're doing.

### Wisteria TLC

Winter is ideal for pruning Wisteria. Cutting back the lateral shoots encourages flowering and helps build a strong framework of spurs that will eventually produce those big, impressive blooms.

### Windowsill Growing

If you are limited for space, herbs such as coriander and chives thrive in troughs or small pots on a sunny kitchen windowsill. Salads - lettuce, winter mixes, and cut-and-come-again varieties - do well in window boxes too.

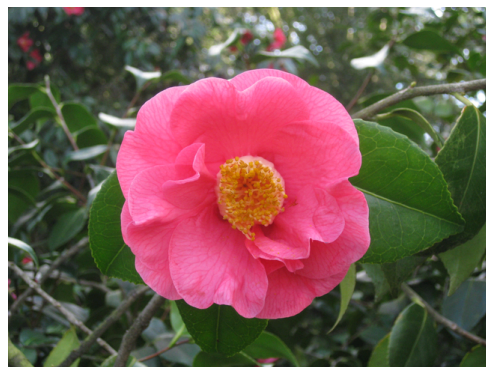
### Early Sowing

January is the time to sow chillies, peppers and onion seeds (especially if you're aiming for large exhibition varieties). Just remember: the challenge isn't only the cold, but the low light levels. Seedlings can become spindly and leggy... But hey - it's all trowel and error.



Snow drops

Camelia





## STAYING WELL THIS WINTER



Last winter saw a sharp rise in A&E attendances, often for illnesses that could have been treated more quickly by other NHS services. If you need medical help quickly and it's not a life-threatening emergency - visit your local pharmacist, GP or call NHS 111.

If you're on a low income, you can also ask your local pharmacy if you're eligible for free medicines for minor illnesses like fevers, headaches and minor injuries.

### The flu vaccine

With flu cases rising, the NHS in north London is calling on residents to check if they or their loved ones are eligible for a free flu vaccination.

Last winter thousands of people were also admitted to hospital with flu, many of them living with long-term health conditions.

The flu vaccine is safe, effective and helps prevent serious illness and can keep you well and out of hospital this winter.

### Who is eligible?

You are eligible for a free flu vaccination if you are:

- Under 65 and living with a long-term health condition
- 65 and over
- Pregnant
- A child aged 2 -16
- The main carer of an older or disabled person.
- A frontline health or social care worker

### Book your vaccination today!

You can book your free flu vaccine at your GP practice or local pharmacy today, to find out more, search "NHS flu".


## OLDER AND BETTER

### ANOTHER REASON TO BE POSITIVE



A Yale study found that positive expectations of ageing halved the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, compared to those who saw old age as an inevitable period of decline. Astonishingly, this was even true of people who carried a harmful variant of the APOE gene, which is known to render people more susceptible to the disease.

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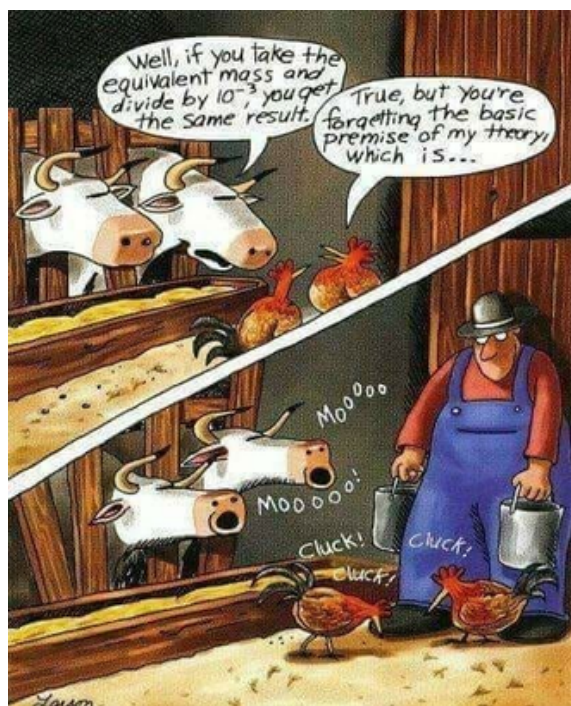
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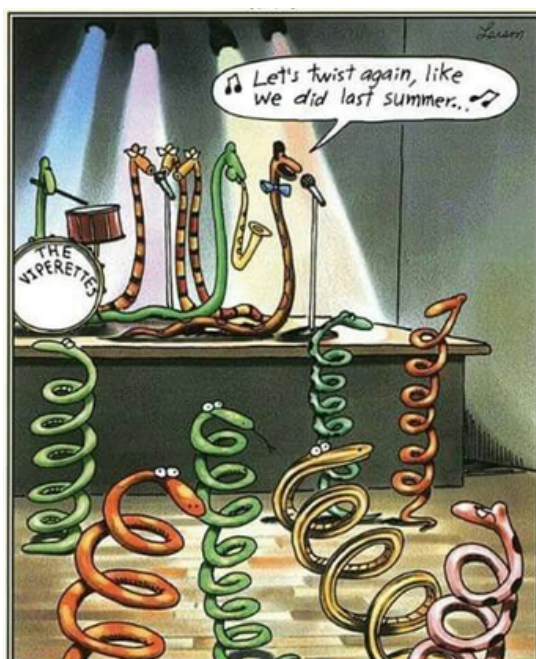
If you have enjoyed this newsletter, or have any suggestions, please let us know. Just drop us a line at Pigeon Post, Age UK Barnet, Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT



3	7	8	2	5	4	9	6	1
1	6	5	3	7	9	2	8	4
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6	9	4	7	2	8	1	5	3
2	3	7	1	9	5	6	4	8
8	5	1	6	4	3	7	9	2
7	8	9	5	1	2	4	3	6
5	2	6	4	3	7	8	1	9
4	1	3	9	8	6	5	2	7

Riddle answers

1. A preacher.
2. A book.
3. A needle or a potato,
4. : A telephone/phone.
5. A match.



1	N	I	C	K	E	L		4	O	S	C	A	R	S
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15	G				N			S					O	16
17	A	L	O	O	F			19	I	N	F	R	O	N
	T		I		I				T		O		D	I
21	H	O	L	I	D	A	Y				22	R	O	B
	E		E		E						C		Y	G
23	R	I	D	D	L	E			24	R	E	M	E	D