

Time to Shine

Ey up, is this ageist?

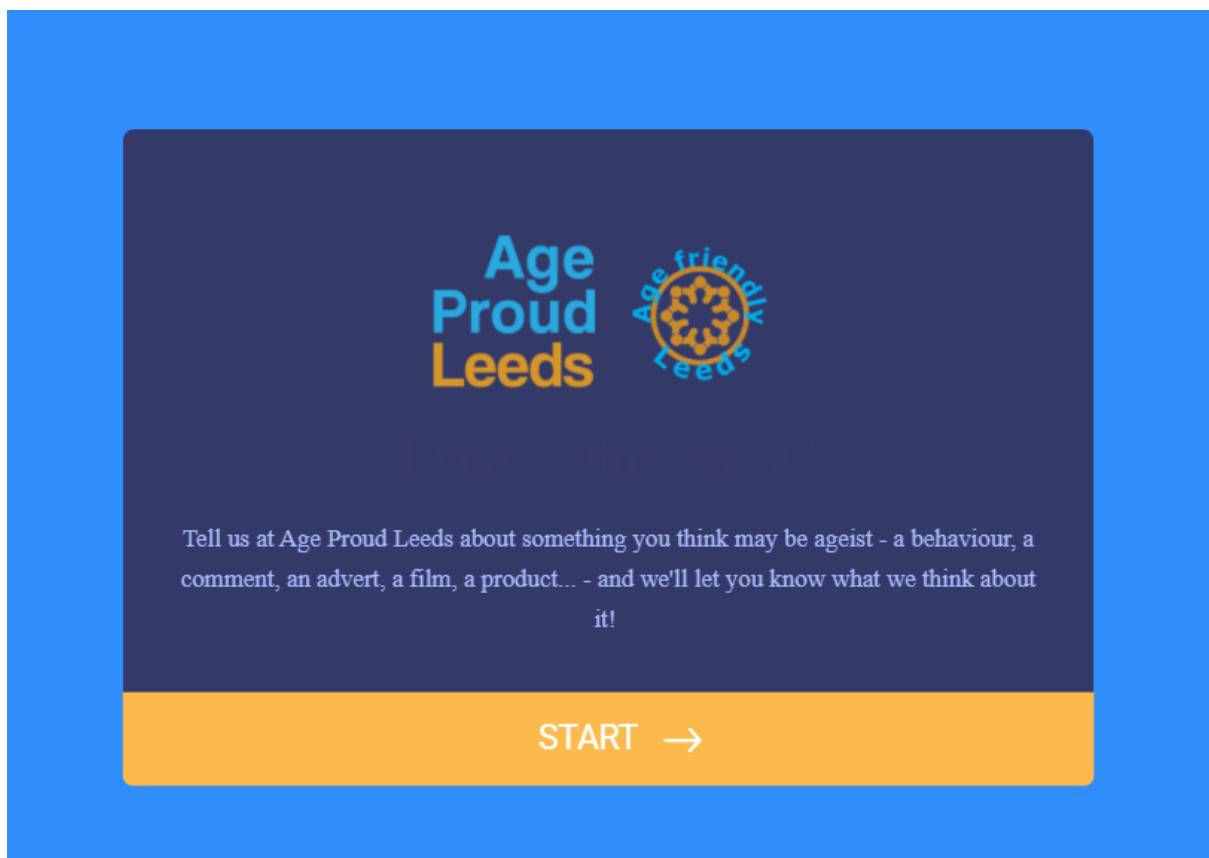
**“Ageism is everywhere yet it is the most socially normalised of any prejudice.”
(World Health Organization)**


At Age Proud Leeds we know that ageism is all too common, and we want to shine a light on it! So, if you think you’ve seen, heard or done something ageist, please share it with us and we may publish it on this page, and write what we think about it.

By talking about it and exploring why something is ageist, we can start to break down ageist assumptions and stereotypes that are so harmful to us all.

Send us something you think might be ageist.

We were inspired by Ashton Applewhite's brilliant *Yo, Is This Ageist?* to do our own Yorkshire version.



Age Proud Leeds 

Tell us at Age Proud Leeds about something you think may be ageist - a behaviour, a comment, an advert, a film, a product... - and we'll let you know what we think about it!

START →

Rob from Kirkstall says:

This is interesting: 'Over 70s face driving curfews, trackers and distance limits. Proposals could see older drivers with medical issues keep their licences if they agree to monitoring and restrictions' (Auto Express, 29.03.21) Sold as a way of enabling older people to drive longer, but clearly discriminatory and ghettoising! There must be a word for this kind of 'access'! Are any limits on young male drivers being proposed?

We say:

Thanks Rob. You might presume that age-based restrictions come from statistics around road traffic accidents, but research by the RAC Foundation states that "drivers aged 75 and over make up 6% of all licence holders but account for just 4.3% of all deaths and serious injuries."

So, why talk of the proposed restrictions? Myths around older people being incompetent drivers? Fears of an ever-increasing number of older drivers all driving the wrong way down the motorway? The reality tells a different story. It seems the proposed restrictions are unlikely to come into being as the Department of Transport states: "It is the law that all drivers must tell the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency about any medical conditions which might affect their driving. There are no plans to introduce graduated driving licenses for drivers aged 70 or over." Good news!

Nasreen, from Leeds, says:

I was watching the BBC drama 'Thirteen' (Episode 2: 18 minutes 35 seconds in). The actress playing the role of a detective is in a care home with a professional partner. He doesn't really want to be there. To which she says: "Whereas I positively love the stale air and threat of imminent death". Is it any surprise care homes get the kind of reputation they do?



We say:

Thank you Nasreen. This fictional dialogue is an example of 'casual' or 'everyday' ageism. A negative remark about older people or something that is associated with ageing is dropped into a conversation, and accepted without challenge. Speaking in this callous, insensitive and condescending way about a care home, adds to the negative 'frame' that exists around ageing. Casual remarks such as these are absorbed by the viewer, accepted as the norm, and add to the stigma associated with living in a care home. Covid, cuts to services and the lack of action from current and previous governments to address the inadequacies of the social care system is also a factor. We know all these issues have a negative impact on the quality of services for older and disabled people.

Tony Watts of Later Life AGenda sent us this:

I love our Facebook Portal - it keeps us in daily touch with our grandchildren scattered around the world. But why the assumption that it's so simple that "even a nan" could use it? This Granddad was using IT before the Internet was a thing. I have asked Facebook to take it down and asked them for a response to my concerns - but no reply on those new-fangled social media platforms Facebook and Twitter.



We say:

Thanks for highlighting this Tony. It's very patronising, on the grounds of both age and gender. It's another example of advertisers using a stereotype 'that older people can't/won't use tech', in a 'jokey' way. This reinforces the stereotype, resulting in ageist attitudes and older people feeling undermined, undervalued and mis-represented. It's even more frustrating that they are using this ageist advert to promote what looks to be a great age friendly product! An exercise in how to insult your key audience!

Lisa from Roundhay sent us this:

I saw this article in an interior design magazine about the top 100 things we like in our homes.



We say:

Yes, ageist stereotypes are at play here. Both in the idea that older people stay in and have baths on a Friday night... and in the assumption that really old people don't have baths with their partners! The article is implicitly saying it's ok to be older, as long as you're not too old! Newsflash - There is no upper age limit on sharing baths! We don't need articles like this setting/reinforcing social norms on older people's behaviour.

Rob from Kirkstall sent us this:

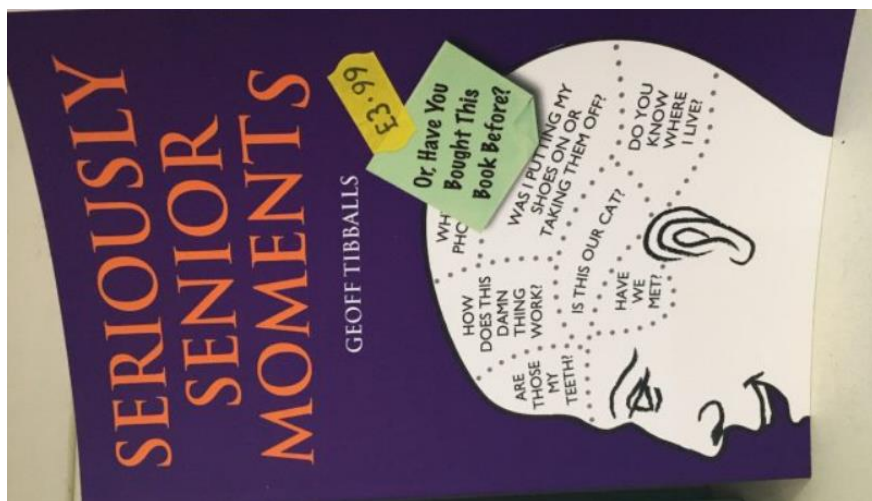
Older people are being excluded from the vast majority of trials to find treatments and a vaccine for COVID-19, according to a study. Around 9% of the global population is 65 and older, but this demographic has accounted for up to 40% of coronavirus cases and 80% of deaths. People in that age group were reported as absent from half of US trials for COVID-19 treatments, and all of the vaccine trials, researchers found. It raises the risk that treatments won't be suitable for those hit hardest by the pandemic. (Sky News, from American Medical Association's Internal Medicine journal)

We say:

Yep, excluding a key demographic based on age, that's ageist! We talk more about how ageist structures within our society often exclude older people, medical research being an example of this, in our blog What do you expect at your age?

Rob from Kirkstall sent us this:

I saw this in a bookshop. In 'normal' times I would have picked it up and had a look, in the forlorn hope that it's a serious study of ageism! But I've since looked it up and found that it's part of a series of 'hilarious' books poking fun at 'senior moments': exactly as annoying as the cover suggests!



We say:

The reason that the term 'senior moments' is ageist is that it plays to a stereotype that all older people are forgetful, with the implication that they're just not as competent as younger people. First, it bypasses the fact that younger people forget things too. The synopsis describes the book as "Entertaining and uplifting (...) another hilarious look at those embarrassing setbacks experienced in one's senior years." This is a generalisation - older people are individuals and we all age differently.

For example "about 20% of people in their nineties escape cognitive decline completely"*. For the other 80% of people there is some reduction in some cognitive functions as we age, but guess what - ageing also brings benefits to the way we think as the "ageing brain enables greater emotional maturity, adaptability to change, and levels of well-being." Now a book about that would be entertaining and uplifting! Try reading *'This Chair Rocks' by Ashton Applewhite instead.

Sarah from Horsforth sent us this:

I read in a recent article in The Telegraph that Tony Abbott, the former Australian prime minister and newly appointed trade advisor to the UK government said: "...some elderly Covid-19 patients should be allowed to die to reduce the economic costs of lockdown."

We say:

It would seem that Tony Abbott values the economy over human lives. Notably it is older people who are the ones who are expected to give up their lives in order that the economy can be saved, for whom? Younger people? At what cost? Losing our loved ones? Who's next? Disabled people? People with health conditions? Another example of how older people's lives are not seen as having value.

Harriet from Chapel Allerton sent us this:

I got an email from a company that promotes fun online shareable products - check out the words they use on The first sign of middle age and how to beat it!!



We say:

Firstly the whole concept of trying to 'beat' middle age is nonsensical. No matter what we do we're going to get older. If we're lucky. Not accepting this or trying to delay or ignore it is not good for us. The author of the blog talks about turning 50 and "The dreaded one-hand-on-the-knee-pick-up" i.e. using your hand on your knee to push yourself up to standing. His assertion that "No one under the age of 30 does the dreaded one-hand-on-the-knee-pick-up. No one." ignores the fact that younger people live with physical impairments too. But it's the word 'dreaded' that highlights the link that many people make between ageing and associated physical impairment, with fear and shame. We at Age Proud Leeds don't see a problem with a helping hand to stand, or a hearing aid to stay involved in the conversation, or a mobility scooter to keep getting out and about. We say rather than resisting signs of ageing and hiding them away, it's better to adapt and continue to live the life you want to live, and to be proud of it!

The Preservative Party (at Leeds City Museum) sent us this BBC News article about actress Julia Sawalha, who has said she is "devastated and furious" at not being in the Chicken Run sequel, claiming she was told her voice sounds "too old".



We say:

The producers of Chicken Run 2 give the reason that Sawalha's voice now sounds 'too old'. However, Sawalha tried to challenge the decision by re-recording her voice, sounding "nigh on the same as it was in the original film" and sending it to them - and yet still the decision stands. We wonder what else was at play in the decision to recast the role? As it is an animation, it is only the voice that should matter, but "according to a study by Polygraph, women are given less dialogue in Hollywood films the older they get. From an analysis of 2,000 movies, it found that women between the ages of 22 and 31 spoke 38% of all female dialogue. The figure fell to 31% for actors aged 32 to 41 and 20% for those aged 42 to 65. (20%). But it's at 65 – around the age which we know from our research that public identifies as 'old' – that the real problems start. At this age, men get just 5% of the lines and women 3%." (The Perennials, Ipsos MORI, 2019)

Sean from Seacroft sent us this:

was watching a rerun of Room 101 on TV Channel, Dave. Greg Wallace, one of the 'celebrity' guests, listed one of his hates as old people in front of him at cashpoints. He feels they are too slow and hold everyone up and that they should be given their own cashpoints with big buttons on them. What he should be annoyed at is his own ignorance, lack of empathy and lack of patience!

We say:

We agree Sean. As well as the views of Greg Wallace showing a lack of empathy, we question why the BBC (and then Dave) are broadcasting these views as something to laugh at? Comments such as these feed into commonly held stereotypes about all older people being slow and unable to use technology, and are incredibly patronising and judgmental. By broadcasting them these stereotypes are reinforced as 'normal' and 'ok' and even 'funny' to the millions of people watching at home. If somebody (regardless of age) did need longer at a cash machine, we should be showing kindness and understanding to them. Having said that, the idea of a cash machine with bigger buttons is not a bad idea and would probably be of benefit to lots of people!

Send us something you think might be ageist.

Downloaded: April 2021