



# Senior London

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*The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the GLF*

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## Dear Forum Members and Supporters

We are now in the phase of getting some help to reduce the cost-of-living crises. I am afraid that whatever older Londoners receive would not be sufficient to cover the very low increase in State Pensions. Older people are being criticised for being greedy in that we will be receiving a 10% increase in State Pensions next April. Unfortunately, we have been through low increases in State Pensions through the ages. We are therefore promoting the take up of Pension Credit to those who qualify.

Coronavirus is still with us although all the restrictions have been relaxed; please do take care as new variants of Covid 19 are very much alive and we are informed by NHS London that hospitalisation may be necessary for vulnerable people. A new set of vaccines would be available in coming months.

Transport for London is continuing to charge for the use of public transport earlier than 9 a.m. This has resulted in large costs to a number of older Londoners. The GLF has submitted its opposition to this restriction on the grounds that: older people with medical appointments at hospitals must pay; older Londoners working full or part-time who are usually lower-paid women starting work at 9 am must pay; grandparents who volunteer to take their grandchildren to school before 9 am and older volunteers traveling before 9 am must pay. People with disabilities are exempt but their carers are not.

Stay safe, stay well.

Asoke Dutta  
Chair, GLF

# Dial-A-Ride Report

Published on 06 July 2022



Age UK London has partnered with Transport for All (TfA) to carry out research with users of TfL's Dial-a-Ride Service.

The research has shown that the door-to-door service has a vital role in enriching the quality of life of its users and reduces social isolation and loneliness.

However, the lack of flexibility in the way the service is run is limiting the potential it has to truly transform lives and reach those Londoners that would benefit the most. The free, bookable bus service for disabled Londoners of all ages allows them to shop, meet with friends and family, and attend health, wellbeing and social groups and classes.

The service can make the difference between being stuck at home and living the lives that people want to live. Yet many of the users find the booking service causes stress and frustration with one saying: *"They tend to disappoint, and it raises my anxiety which is not very good for my health."*

While celebrating the huge difference Dial-a-Ride makes to the lives of those using the service we are making recommendations to enhance the experience of users.

These include changes to the booking system, particularly to avoid situations where users give up on calls to the telephone booking line because of the long waiting times.

We are also calling for longer operating hours, fewer restrictions on the length of journeys and much better communications, particularly when it relates to service changes.

Commenting on the fact that the service finishes at 10pm, one of the interviewees, quipped: *"I forgot I'm disabled, and I'm not allowed to have a social life after 10 o'clock."*

Speaking of frustrations with the telephone booking line another interviewee, said: *"They keep telling you that your call is important to them, and they will get back to you. You're sitting there glued to the phone waiting and waiting."*

Despite this, the overwhelming majority of interviewees were very happy with the Dial-a-Ride drivers who are much liked by users and who described them as helpful, courteous and often willing to go the extra mile.

Users are slowly returning to the service following the pandemic. Between April 2021 and March 2022, the number of weekly trips started to increase to between 5,000 and 10,000 trips per week. This is nevertheless a vast drop from pre-pandemic times when there were up to 20,000 trips per week.

The report, entitled **Dial-a-Ride: From Door to More** can be downloaded: [dial-a-ride-report-july-2022.pdf](#) ([ageuk.org.uk](#))  
Further information is available from [campaigns@ageuklondon.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@ageuklondon.org.uk).

## How much do you know about Pension Credit?

Many older people are struggling in the face of rising costs in gas & electricity, fuel, groceries and many other of life's essentials which have been affected in the current economic crisis. So, it is important that people access whatever benefits and rebates they may be entitled to. Currently, more than 1.4 million pensioners in Britain receive Pension Credit. However, many are still not claiming this extra financial help and it is estimated up to £1.7bn is being left unclaimed.

Pension Credit is a benefit for people over State Pension age on lower incomes. It has two parts: Guarantee Credit and Savings Credit. Only people who reached State Pension age before 6 April 2016 qualify to claim the Savings Credit part of Pension Credit. If you reach State Pension age on or after 6 April 2016, you can still get the Guarantee Credit part of Pension Credit.

### How much is Pension Credit?

#### Guarantee Credit – for the 2020-23 tax year.

Guarantee Credit tops up your weekly income to a guaranteed level of £182.60 if you're single or £278.70 if you're married or in a civil partnership.

**Savings Credit** - Savings Credit provides some extra money if you've made some provision towards your retirement by saving, or with a pension other than the basic State Pension. The extra income provided by Savings Credit is up to: £14.48 a week for a single person, and £16.20 for married couples, civil partners or a partner you live with as if you were married.

### What counts as income

Your income includes State Pension, other pensions, earnings from employment and self-employment and most social security benefits, for example Carer's Allowance

### What does not count as income

Not all benefits are counted as income. For example, the following are not counted:

- Adult Disability Payment
- Attendance Allowance
- Christmas Bonus
- Child Benefit
- Disability Living Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment
- social fund payments like Winter Fuel Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Reduction

If you get **Pension Credit**, you may get other help too, like with housing costs, council tax or heating bills.



HM Government

### Your savings and investments

If you have £10,000 or less in savings and investments this will not affect your Pension Credit.

If you have more than £10,000, every £500 over £10,000 counts as £1 income a week. For example, if you have £11,000 in savings, this counts as £2 income a week.

### Other help if you get Pension Credit

If you get Pension Credit you can also get other help, such as:

- Housing Benefit if you rent the property you live in
- Support for Mortgage Interest if you own the property you live in
- a Council Tax discount
- a free TV license if you're aged 75 or over
- help with NHS dental treatment, glasses, and transport costs for hospital appointments
- help with your heating costs through the Warm Home Discount Scheme
- a discount on the Royal Mail redirection service if you're moving house

For more information, to use the free online calculator, to check eligibility or to claim, visit [www.gov.uk/pension-credit](http://www.gov.uk/pension-credit) or call 0800 99 1234.

### Cost of living announcement

To help with the rising cost of living, the government has announced a **£650 one-off payment for people on means-tested benefits**. If you're getting any of the following benefits, you will receive this payment in two lump sums, the first on 1 July and the second in the autumn:

- Pension Credit
- Universal Credit
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit

# The Shapeshifting Covid Virus



Many people are acting as though Covid has disappeared, but we must remain vigilant as its ability to mutate means it is still dangerous. We should take up offers of boosters and encourage young people to get vaccinated

Something unusual has been happening – there have been far fewer flu cases than usual. A new strain killed at least 18 million people worldwide in 1918. Thus far, Covid has killed at least 6 million. So has flu gone away or is it hiding in the wings and mutating? And what about Covid?

## Flu

There are two types of flu: A and B. B is a human variety and has been with us an estimated 10,000 years in its various incarnations, many of which we have built immunity to. Type A originates in animals and birds and can migrate in certain circumstances to us where it can do untold fatal damage and further mutate if not kept in tight check.

In December, a 79-year-old in Devon picked up a form of avian flu from his 100 strong flock of Muscovy ducks. He was the first to test positive for a new strain of flu (H5N1 if you're interested). His birds had to be slaughtered but the good news is that it didn't spread any further. We know that the flu virus is going nowhere, we're far too good a host to be abandoned, it's just polishing up its act. If you haven't had a flu jab, there's still time as this season's jab helps to build immunity to whatever mutation we're visited by in the Autumn. The next jab will be tweaked to the new emerging strain.

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## Covid complacency

After the lifting of restrictions in this country, case numbers of Covid infections rose to a record high. In early April, 1 in 13 had fallen victim to it with rising rates among those between school year 12 and aged 34.

For those 70+, the highest number ever for this age group was recorded. Many victims are not seriously ill and this has led to some ill-judged complacency, largely perhaps because we all want Covid to be yesterday's issue. Obviously, the more cases there are, the more chance Omicron, now our dominant strain, has to mutate. It has already, so far not too dangerously but, in Enfield, the North Mid is still facing too many hospitalisations especially of the unvaccinated.

## Low uptake of vaccination

We must remember that immunity derived from vaccination declines over time and many Forum members will have received their last jab in September or October 2021. These individuals are at higher risk of severe Covid, and an extra booster dose can be vital for the over 75s. Vaccination is more important than ever if we are to return to normality. Too many of us are saying "well, I've been OK so far, so why worry?" often comparing themselves to someone we know who has had Covid and "wasn't too bad". Everyone's vulnerability is different and Covid makes a beeline for our weaknesses, as extending official symptoms of Covid illustrate.

The over 50s need to remain vigilant and avoid risky behaviour and settings. Summer helps as we can spend more time outside, but inside shops, trains and Tubes and restricted spaces masks are important in preventing aerosol transmission. Encourage your children and grandchildren to go for a jab, it's available for 5- to 11-year-olds now. We must remember that the virus is vastly cleverer than us. How many of us can shapeshift? And that's not a question about weight loss.

**An extra booster dose can be vital for the over-75s**

Article by Enfield over 50s Forum

# Your Eye Health Matters

By Bryan Naylor



There are currently eight hundred and fifty thousand people in the UK with dementia and one and a half million with sight loss due to Macular Disease. We all know that dementia is a dreadful condition, ruining the lives of sufferers and families, losing one's sight is both more common and equally life changing for many older people.

Macular disease is the biggest cause of sight loss in the UK, with cases increasing even before the pandemic, and forecast to continue rising into the future.

So we have a problem, what are we doing about it? The answer, sadly, is not enough. Almost all the eye clinics in London are operating to capacity. If the expected increase comes about we are going to need some changes to the way we deal with the problem. Some will say that it is just a matter of money.

Yes, that is going to be needed, but it is not the complete answer. Yes we need to put more cash into research; we need to find a cure and that must be high on the priority list. We need to train more doctors, nurses, and technicians; and give them bigger and better facilities too. That will take both time and money and the patients are here now and the queue is getting longer.

We know that early identification of the problem is a key part of the answer. The majority of potential sufferers are older people who are entitled to FREE regular eye tests. Almost every optician in the country offers a free test and many will carry out the test at home.

You're entitled to a free NHS sight test if you are 60 or older, registered as partially sighted or blind, or have been diagnosed with diabetes or glaucoma. Like so many benefits, it can be 'use it or lose it'. A recent article suggested that Opticians may become reluctant to offer the test as the fee from the NHS does not cover the cost for the optician.

Several eye charities and professional bodies have formed a new group called "The Eyes Have It Partnership".

One of the many issues being addressed by the group is the patient pathway. Most older people concerned about their sight start with a visit to a local optician. If the optician identifies a potential problem he is required to refer the patient to their GP. The GP usually then refers the patient to the local eye clinic. One such London Hospital states on its website that, "*GP referral for treatment takes up to 40 weeks for 90% patients*".

It is clear that that level of delay is both unacceptable and dangerous. One suggestion, simple to describe but fraught with difficulties would be to allow the optician to refer the patient to the eye clinic. Apparently simple changes like this could save serious loss of sight for many patients. There are many other changes which could add to an improved pathway and better outcomes for those of us facing the threat of sight loss.

## Why Parks are important



**Let's take advantage of our wonderful parks and discover the value of nature, but most important help preserve our greenspaces for the next generation**

There is growing evidence to suggest that exposure to natural environments can be associated with mental health benefits. Proximity to greenspace has been associated with lower levels of stress and reduced symptomology for depression and anxiety.

London parks are great all year round but it's during the summer months that the parks are at its most beautiful. Best time in the warm months is to walk early in the morning or late afternoon when the temperature can be just right with a cool breeze and it becomes all that more appealing, you'd be missing out if you didn't explore the wonders of our parks. Great way to keep fit and share some fun with friends connecting with nature.

I have always appreciated the luxury of access to Hyde Park, especially when feeling stressed and in need of some quality time with a friend. What a marvelous way to relax, and its free. As a result of my love of greenspaces, I joined the Friends of the Royal Parks and its been a wonderful learning experience, I recommend to everyone to join their local park Friends.

**In London there are around 900 parks friends' groups – groups of volunteers – getting together to protect, improve and bring communities together in their local parks.**

The London Friends of Greenspaces Network is growing fast. Parks friends' groups advocate for improvements, new attractions or simply for parks continued care. They undertake voluntary action themselves in partnership with the council.

They also organise events for people to enjoy their local space, promoting understanding of the history and ecology of our spaces and providing opportunities for communities to come together. They play an important role in enabling people to benefit from the health benefits parks provide.



# Heatwave!

## How to keep cool and stay well in the hot weather:

- Stay out of the heat, cool yourself down, keep your environment cool or find somewhere else that is cool if possible.
- Look out for neighbours, family or friends who may be isolated and unable to care for themselves; make sure they are able to keep cool during a heatwave.
- Get medical advice if you are suffering from a chronic medical condition or taking multiple medications.
- Make sure medicines are stored below 25°C or in the fridge (read the storage instructions on the packaging).
- Carry on taking all prescribed medicines unless advised not to by a medical professional. But be aware that some prescription medicines can reduce your tolerance of heat.
- Be alert and if someone is unwell or needs further help, see the resources section at the end of this leaflet.

## Listen to the weather forecast and the news

- Knowing the forecast can help you plan ahead and adapt as necessary.
- Heatwaves may affect other services, such as power and water supplies, and transport.
- Air pollution can become worse during periods of hot weather.

Listen to the news to be aware of when a heatwave has been forecast and how long it is likely to last. Check the weather forecast and any [high temperature health warnings](#).

Recommended actions and health advice for the general population and those who may be particularly sensitive to air pollution are available from:

UK AIR by calling 0800 55 66 77 (recorded information) or **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**

## What you can do

- Avoid being out in the sun during the hottest part of the day (around midday) and plan your day to avoid heavy activity during extreme heat.
- Bring everything you will need with you, such as a bottle of water, sun cream and a hat.
- If you have to go out in the heat, walk in the shade, apply sunscreen, and wear a hat and light clothing.
- Be prepared, as heatwaves can affect transport services and you might need extra water.



Keep Cool!



## The Greater London Forum for Older People

The Greater London Forum for Older People is the 'Voice of older Londoners' working with Forums across the London region. The aim is to increase the older citizen's voice through civic engagement and participation in elected and appointed bodies to ensure the needs of communities are met through the development of appropriate and improved services. This is achieved through the provision of information, support and guidance, advice and advocacy, training and education and capacity building of the forums.

London Forums working to reduce isolation and loneliness, foster inclusion, and community cohesion. Older residents can be part of the decision-making process within their borough, be informed of local services, gain access to information on healthy lifestyle and be independent.

For further information about the GLF or your local Forum please can you contact us:

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