

## Live Longer Better- language and imagery insights

This language and imagery insights summary has been pulled together using findings from a range of insights projects undertaken by Hampshire County Council. This document is intended to add local value to the [Centre for Ageing Better: Guide to talking about ageing and older people](#).

Sections covered:

- 1) Mental health
- 2) Ageing and 'vulnerability'
- 3) Continence
- 4) Use of imagery
- 5) Striking the right tone

### 1) Mental health

The term 'mental health' does not resonate with many older adults and alternatives should be used. For many in this age group it often is felt to refer to dementia or other severe mental illnesses – and most now see it as a modern 'buzzword'. Respondents in this group reported they were brought up to 'just get on with things'.

For some, it is a term associated with more extreme illness or disability.

'Wellbeing' or 'emotional wellbeing' were better in language terms than 'mental health', but the concept per se was still something this generation of respondents struggled with, so reference to it is better avoided.

Respondents could talk about how they felt when feeling positive:

- Staying positive – the key phrase
- Keeping going
- Making the most of it
- Getting on with it
- Enjoying retirement
- Thriving
- Looking after yourself

People found it easier to think and talk about the specific negative aspects of mental wellbeing that were understood:

- Loneliness (easy to understand, easy to empathise with, tangible)
- Having to deal with challenges
- Anxiety/feeling low/struggling to cope (all recognisable, but can be dismissed as something 'you just need to get on with')
- Depression is a recognised term for some, but for others a further instance of a newly created condition that didn't exist when they were younger.

## 2) Ageing and 'vulnerability'

Being older doesn't necessarily mean you are frail, vulnerable or dependent. We often see publications refer to older people as vulnerable, without giving reason for the label. Sometimes it's a well-intentioned but paternalistic mindset, where older people are portrayed as vulnerable and requiring protection.

In the first instance, ask yourself, do I need to use a label? E.g. vulnerable people.

If the answer is definitely yes, it's important to provide a rationale e.g. "older people who are more vulnerable to the health impacts of COVID-19". Or preferably, avoid the term 'vulnerable' altogether, e.g. "older people who are more at risk of the health impacts of COVID-19".

Ageing is often an unwelcome subject, and people report they don't want to think about getting older. This links with a concern of feeling labelled, which may result in being placed in a pigeonhole because of their age.

What doesn't work:

- Healthy ageing - this is a term that older people are unlikely to resonate with.
- References to 'ageing' or 'elderly' – people often do not want to think about it, or to be described that way ('ageing well', 'exercise for the elderly').
- References to specific age groups – people do not like to be put into categories.
- Claims that are not credible (e.g. 'forever young') and those that under-age people.
- Phrases that 'try too hard' or are seen as twee ('Nifty 50s' particularly disliked).
- Phrases that are not relevant to the audience.
- Phrases that imply you have already stopped healthy behaviours (e.g. 'get going again').

Things that could potentially work well:

- Phrases with alliteration or a good ring to them ('moving and improving', 'stronger for longer').
- Language that implies fun ('friendship, fun and fitness').
- Words that don't refer to age groups specifically, or do not reference age at all.
- Phrases that reflect how people want to see themselves. Positive options include:
  - Forever active
  - Live longer better
  - Stronger for longer
  - Being able to continue doing things I enjoy
  - Living life to the full
  - Being able to do everyday things.

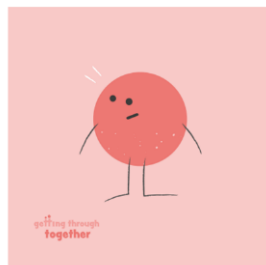
### 3) Contenance

There are some commonalities (and also differences) in language for people around urination. Terms such as 'going to the loo' and 'going to the toilet' are highly used with both friends/family and medical professionals. The term 'urination' is saved almost entirely for medical professionals, while 'wee' is a word more likely to be used informally.

'Not getting to the loo on time' was the most common phrase for use both with medical professionals and friends/family. Terms such as 'experiencing incontinence' are more likely to be used in a medical setting, while 'accident' was more suited to everyday language.

### 4) Imagery

Cartoon style characters are not seen as appealing to older audiences, who preferred human images.




*"I don't relate to them. I would suggest to use real human images as it probably gives people a kind of warm feeling. We are human not cartoons after all."*

*"Cartoons are too simple and it gives people an impression of not being serious."*

Photography was almost always preferred over line drawings and was more engaging. However, single images risk alienation.

Photography is more engaging but may not be inclusive. It can be challenging to find suitable photographic images that portray your message while incorporating a diverse range of ethnicities, genders and ages of older people.

Our strength and balance message testing found that images of visibly older people, were not resonated with (even by those within that age group). Respondents automatically assumed these individuals were living in a care setting.



### Start small

Maintaining your strength and balance can help you to continue doing everyday activities and living independently. With a friend or on your own, gradually increase your balance and strength.

*"Well, that's not really aimed at me. This is saying if you're 80 in a care home, you ought to take some exercise. It's aimed at a different audience."*

*"Target feels too old/not relevant."*

*"Not relevant for anyone not in a day centre or residential home."*

Respondents of market testing also reacted negatively to photos that try to portray very 'happy, smiley old age' as at times they can feel too artificial and risk becoming patronising.

When showing physical activity, there is a balance to be struck between higher energy photos (which can be engaging), and feeling relevant for the target audience and their fitness or ability (images shouldn't be of such extreme activities that they feel unachievable).

One compromise, where appropriate photographic images cannot be sourced, could be to use animated style portrayal of humans as demonstrated below. Note - these images have not yet been tested with Hampshire residents.



## 5) Striking the right tone

Through our market testing for the Live Longer Better website, we asked respondents to comment on the hydration and continence webpage. The original imagery is as shown below and our main strapline was 'It's time to pee in control'.



Although some respondents understood the pun and found the imagery to portray older adults having fun, many found it to be patronising and making light of what can be a very sensitive and embarrassing topic. Following the market testing, this webpage was reviewed considerably to ensure the content was informative and professional whilst keeping a light tone that is easy to understand (less medical jargon). Overall, the content of the page was hugely welcomed, and many respondents found it to be valuable, leading to new information they did not know before.