

"Having an impact - Influencing policy and measuring success"

David Sinclair , International Longevity Centre -UK

The International Longevity Centre-UK is an independent, non-partisan think-tank dedicated to addressing issues of longevity, ageing and population change.



Summary

- About ILC-UK
- How does ILC-UK engage with academics?
- Making an impact
- My tips for engagement

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About ILC-UK

- The International Longevity Centre-UK is the leading think tank on longevity and demographic change. It is an independent, non-partisan think-tank dedicated to addressing issues of longevity, ageing and population change. We develop ideas, undertake research and create a forum for debate.
- Much of our work is directed at the highest levels of government and the civil service, both in London and Brussels.

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Some of our publications

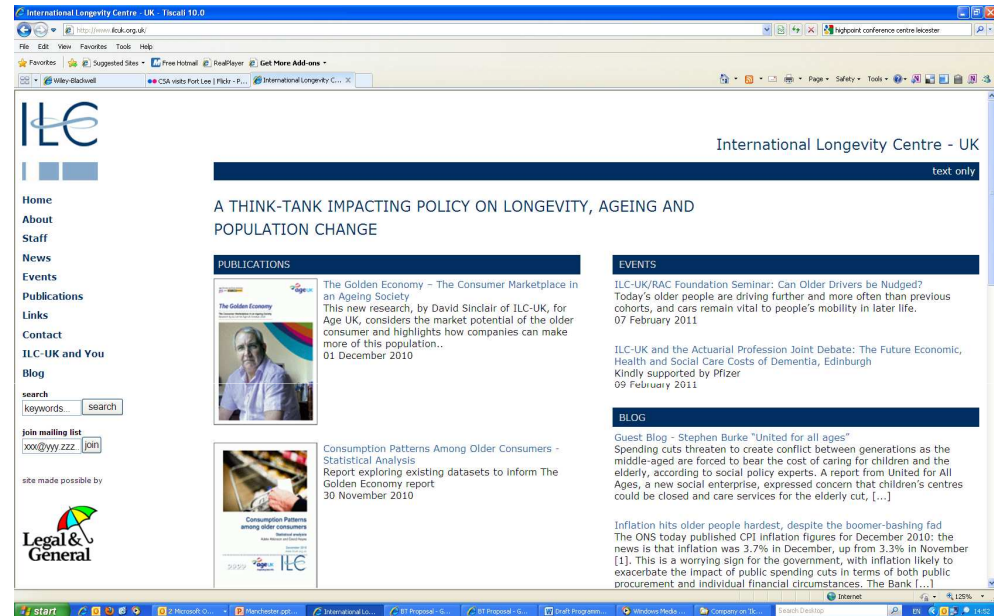


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Our research/policy team

- Baroness Greengross (Chief Executive)
- Researchers (Quantitative/demographer and housing; Public Health; Health and Care; nutrition; Ex Treasury Official)



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We organise events

- In 2011 we organised 30 events in and around Westminster.
- Ten Ministers/Shadow attended these events, which attracted over 1000 people.
- In 2010, we held our first international event in Brussels attracting attendees from across Europe and from the European Parliament and Commission



Photo by: [Paul Kehrer](http://www.flickr.com/photos/paulkehrer/2083446247/)

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Who do we engage with?

- We typically are attracting about 20% of our audience from Government and Quangos.
- We attract about 35% from the voluntary sector and academia and about 35% from the private sector. About 10% of the participants are lay members of the public.

Events often influence

- We organised a dinner and debate on dementia in the House of Lords in June 2009 for Pfizer, the dinner was attended by 5 peers, a minister, several MPs and many leading academics.
- The event proved to be so informative that it was referenced by the minister, in a debate in the House of Lords a week later. As a result of this success, we were commissioned to produce the report of the National Dementia Research Summit for the Department of Health and the Medical Research Council.

We use new media

- We are prolific users of new media to promote our work. In 2010 we published 67 blog posts which drew further attention to our 24 publications during that year. We have over 1900 followers on twitter (and growing).

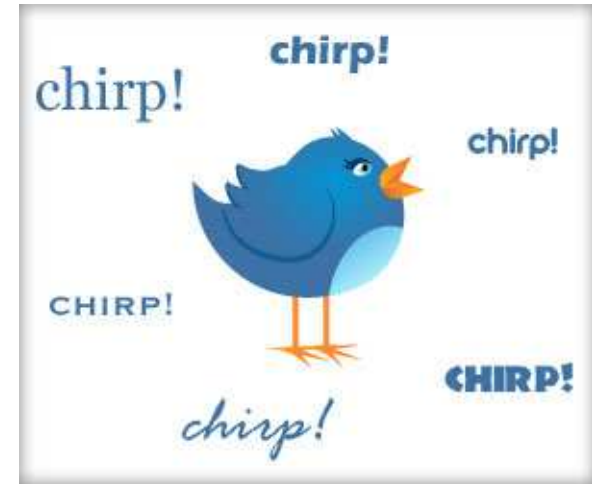


Photo by ivanpw
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And we don't forget the traditional media

- We achieve high levels of media coverage. Recent coverage includes: [Ex-Countryfile presenter wins BBC ageism case](#) (Channel 4); [Let's take the housing fight to wealthy owners with empty spare rooms](#) (Guardian); [Christmas shopping experience 'puts off over-65s'](#); [Grey pound's £100bn Christmas warning to retailers](#) (Telegraph)
- Our research standing is supported by our research work being accepted and covered in prestigious academic journals including the journal 'Health Policy' (<http://www.journals.elsevierhealth.com/periodicals/heap/article/PIIS0168851008002534/abstract>).

How do we engage with academics

- Commissioning research/ the customer
- Speakers at events
- Research partner
- Translation of research into policy practice
- Partnership/ consultation

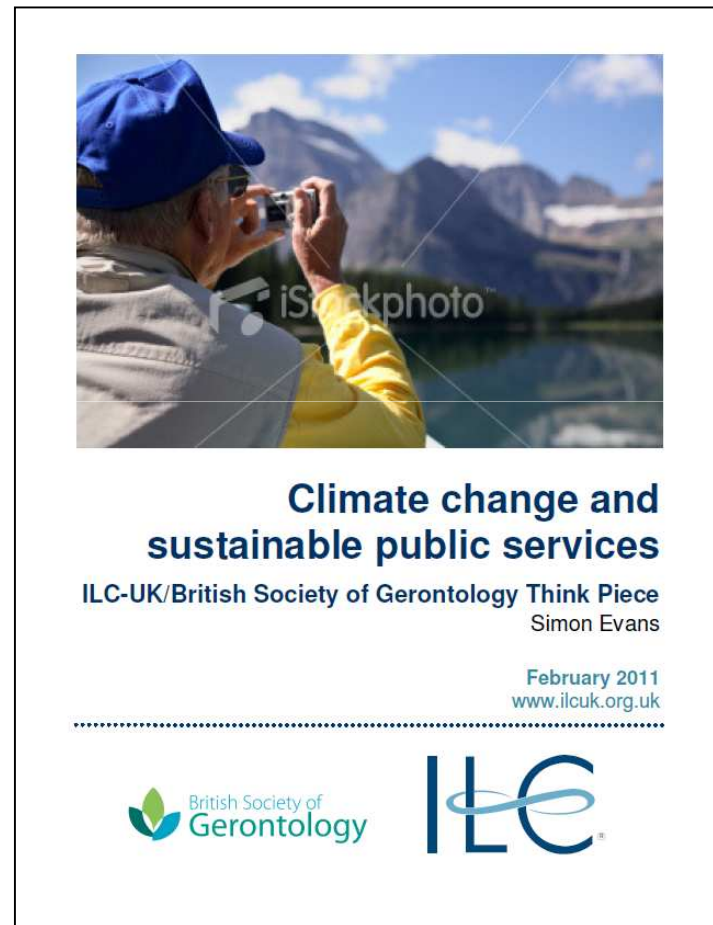
Some examples – ESRC Quality of Life



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Building a relationship with the British Society of Gerontology



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Academic advisory group/ILC-UK advisors

- Professor David Blane
- Professor Elizabeth Burton
- Kate Davidson
- Professor Emily Grundy
- Janet Lewis
- Professor James Nazroo
- Graham Mulley
- Professor Judith Phillips
- Professor Chris Phillipson
- Ceridwen Roberts

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Research partnerships



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Some Truths? Does Government care about academic research?

“Policy-makers don’t have the time or inclination to read academic journals. If you want to influence policy, there needs to be a middle-man who knows how to reach policy-makers, how to speak their language, and will be able to translate which bits of academic research will be relevant to actual policy development.”



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Does the Government care?

“Civil servants don’t (often) even take notice of the research their departments commission – it’s a PR exercise.”

“The image of academia within government departments is very poor (academics are perfectionists, stuck in Ivory Tower, unwilling to get their hands dirty, always over deadline, too expensive, too arrogant).”



Photo by jaybergesen

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And what about the voluntary sector

- They try to be evidence based
- But advocacy organisations don't have to take consensus view or be balanced
- They need to move quickly – Wikipedia is easy to access!
- They don't know how to engage with academia
- They see a lot of research as irrelevant
- They don't have access to peer reviewed material
- They don't know how to analyse research



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But what do we/Government want?

The (right) answers!



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Your help to get things right

Academics should engage with think-tanks/the outside world because we occasionally also get things wrong.

We are in a position to influence policy-makers, and academics could support us in doing this.



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Work across disciplines - Teamwork

“Neither think-tanks nor government care about disciplinary boundaries. Academics must work across disciplines to be effective; too often research outputs are undermined by the function of academic silos.”



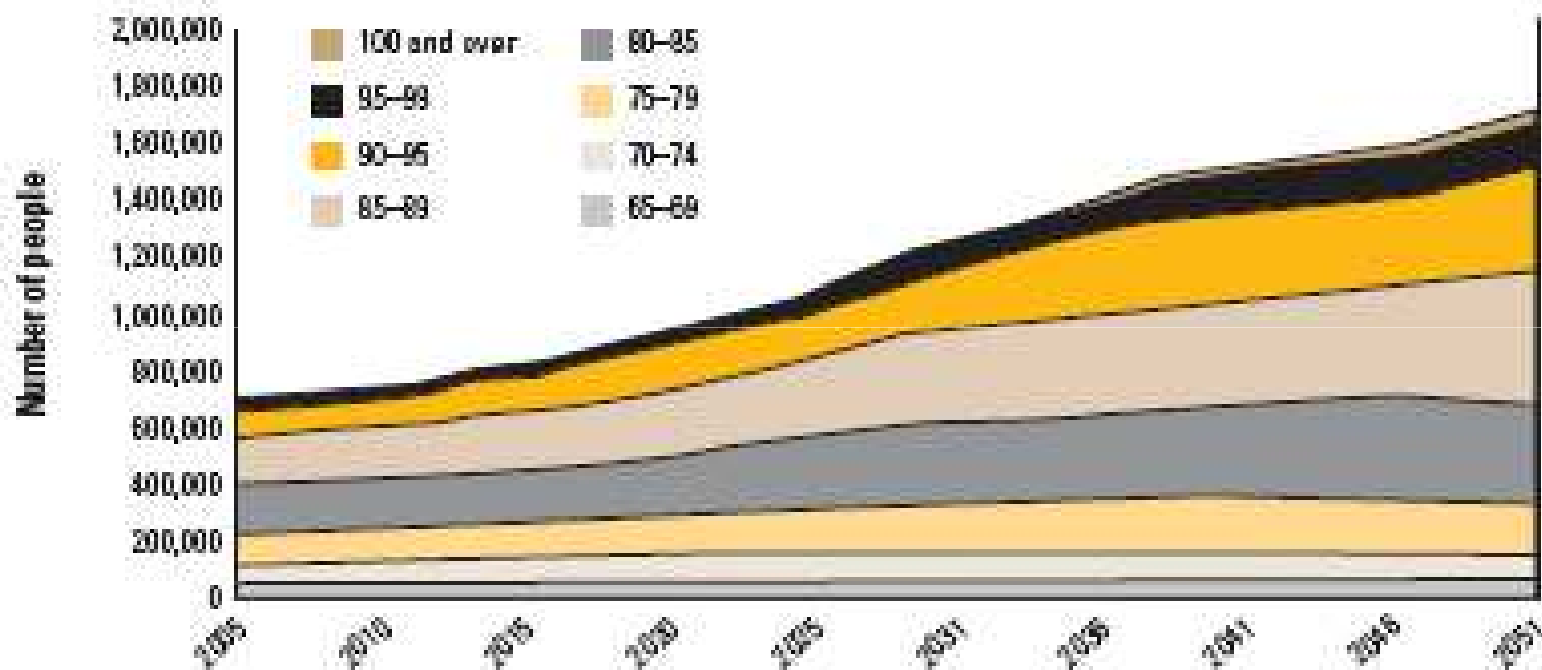
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We are often less specialist than you. We need the specialist input



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Explain the complex

THE TIMES Monday February 9 2009

News

All babies will have gene code mapped at birth 'within ten years'

DAVID GAUSSEY / ALAMY



Babies are already tested for inherited diseases using a heel-prick blood test. A similar test could be used to reveal a baby's genome

Mark Henderson Science Editor

Every baby born a decade from now will have its genetic code mapped at birth, the head of the world's leading genome sequencing company has predicted.

A complete DNA read-out for every newborn will be technically feasible and affordable in less than five years, promising a revolution in healthcare, says Jay Flatley, the chief executive of Illumina.

Only social and legal issues are

By the time the scientists James Watson and Craig Venter had their genomes mapped two years ago, the cost had fallen to about \$1m (£700,000).

Genotyping services, which examine about 2 million of the genome's 6 billion DNA letters for clues to disease, are already available to consumers for about \$1,000 (£700). Those with deeper pockets can have their whole genome mapped for about \$100,000 (£70,000).

Illumina is preparing to launch a

Cutting costs

2001 Human Genome Project produces map. Cost: \$4 bn.

2007 James Watson and Craig Venter, below, have full genome maps, costing \$1m each

to screen for inherited diseases such as cystic fibrosis.

By examining which genetic variants a person has inherited, it is possible to identify raised risks of developing an array of conditions, including cardiovascular disease and many cancers. Those at high risk can then be screened more regularly, or given drugs or dietary advice to lower their chances of becoming ill.

As DNA affects the way certain drugs are metabolised, personal



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Challenge lazy assumptions



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Present the views of older people. Also debate moral/ethical issues.

“But how much smaller do we want a phone?”.

Some/many do but: “I don’t want to live in a smart-home – I’d rather be dead”

Moral and ethical debates – cant afford to ignore them

Must help older people choose technology when it is right for them (tagging/urine tests)



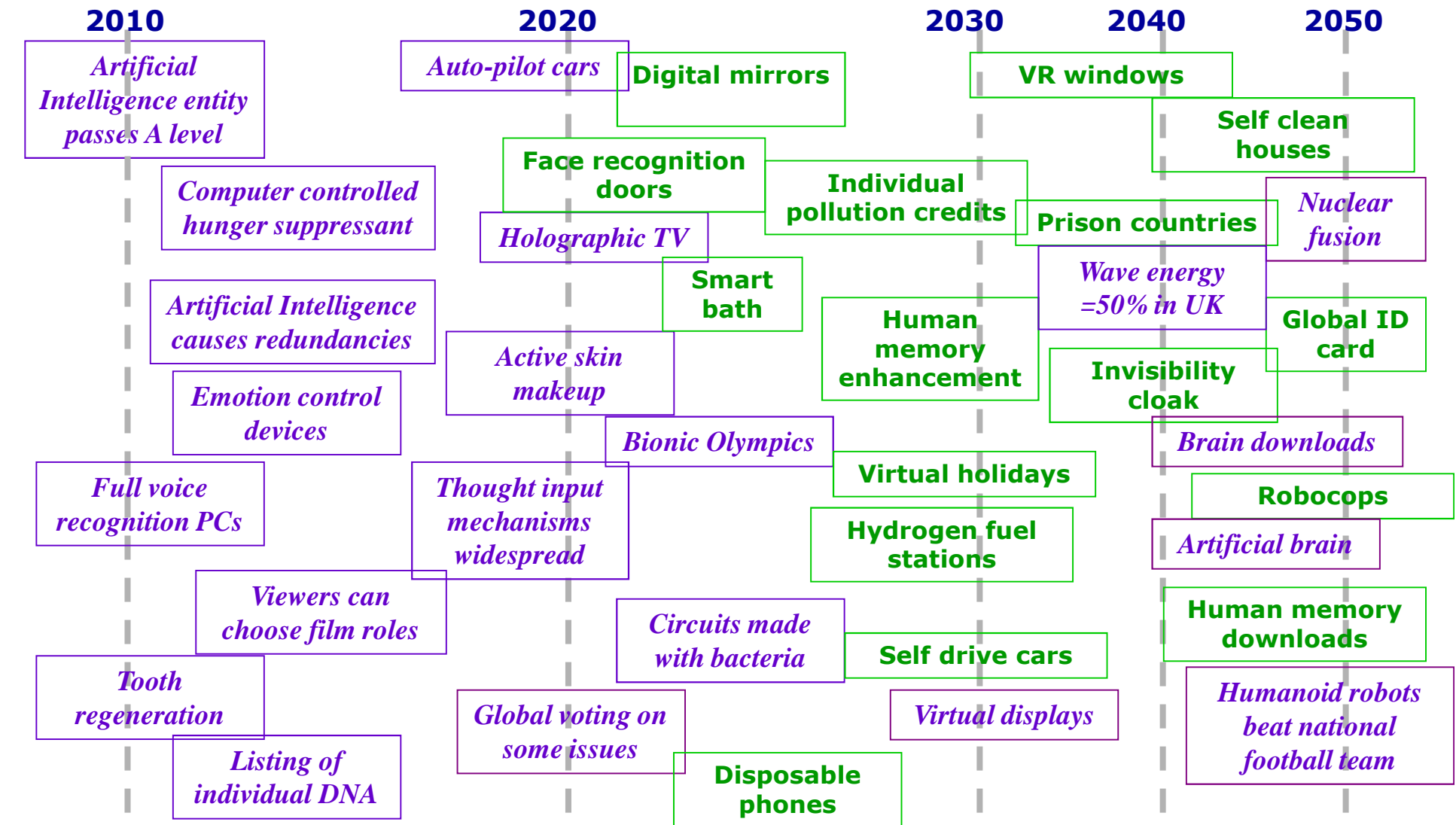
Deliver solutions



*I think there'll be a
cure for cancer one
day. That we never
thought we'd
see...and
Alzheimer's.*

*I would wish for a pill
to cure everything...*

Be timely and Policy Relevant



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So what is the role for academics

“Good policy needs academic expertise. Academics are no less responsible than politicians for bad policy; just because influencing policy is difficult doesn’t mean academics shouldn’t try.”

“Universities need to demonstrate their public value – natural science does this, but social science struggles. The withdrawal of public money from HE can be directly related to the irrelevance of many academics to public policy debates”.



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<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jeffozvold/2253118421/>

Making an impact?

- How can you measure
 - Policy Influence (?Discuss?)
 - Media Coverage
 - Downloads
 - Mentions in Parliament
 - Approaches from Government

So why work with us?/Think Tanks

“Not many think tanks are independent”. You can work with political think tanks but take care

You aren't in London (nor are most Universities)

Universities can be bureaucratic in terms of when you want to engage in policy/media/events

It is easier for us to run an event for opinion formers in London than you. And we will get better people there!.

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Great Expectations report

- Academy of Social Sciences: said universities should engage better with the public but not necessarily directly

Dissemination Older Workers

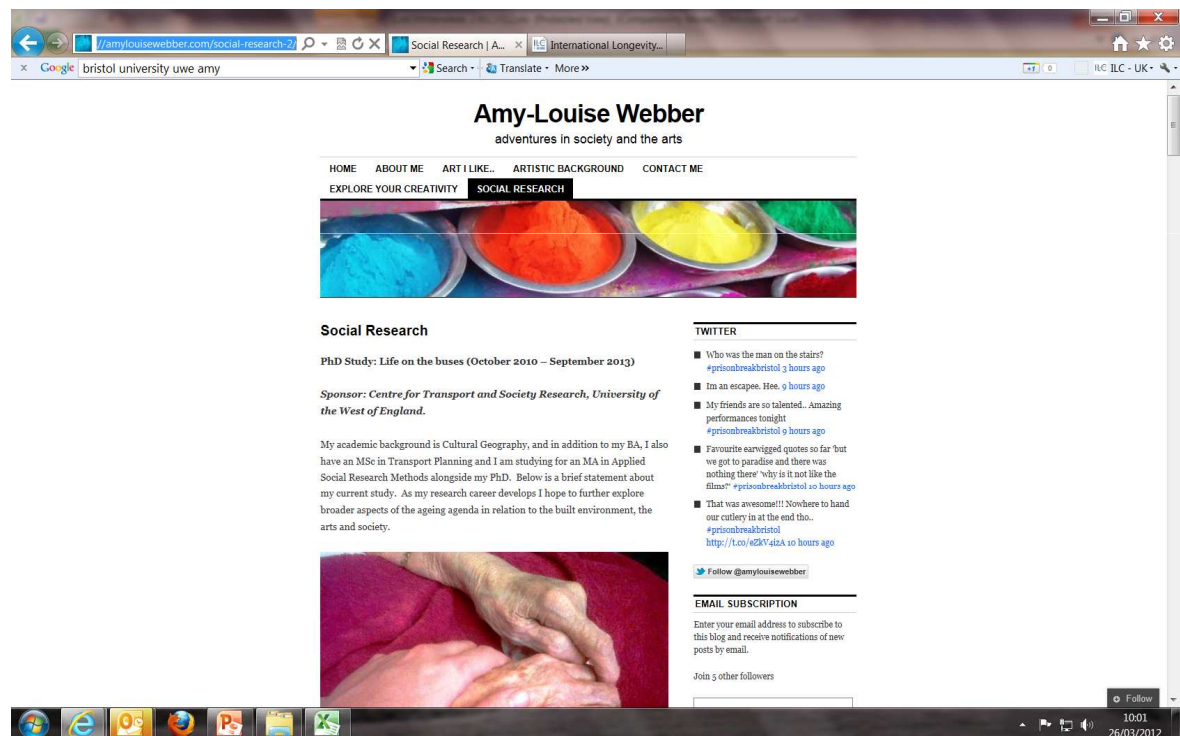
- The Role of Employability in the Labour Market
Transitions of Older Workers: A Cross-National
Study in Europe: Brian Beach
- The Health Effects of Later Life employment:
Katey Matthews

Who should I send it to:

- MPs: DWP Select Committee, MPs who have spoken on the topic (personal letter referencing fact you have noticed what they have said)
- Government: Steve Webb, Lord Freud, Opposition Work and Pensions
- Other: ILC-UK, TAEN, Age UK, PRIME, Unison
- Media: Telegraph/Mail, grey press.
- Private sector: Financial services industry,
- Develop a list whilst you are writing your PHD.

Tips for dissemination – Using new media

- Make the most of Web 2.0/Social Media
 - Blogging
 - Twitter
 - Youtube
 - Put your lectures online?



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Tips for dissemination - Media

- Write a press release
- Make sure your university press office supports you/is accessible/trains you
- If you aren't good at media work don't do it! Accept that others may be better at communicating your research to the right people than you - You are paid to be good academics not media pundits!
- You can say no. It isn't all about national media/face to face (trade magazines etc)
- But if you do want to engage with the media be accessible

Tips for dissemination - accessibility

- “Write clearly”
 - Think about the title!
 - “think about who would be interested in your work”
 - understand the potential audience
 - Disseminate throughout not just at the end.
 - Bring out the things the media will be interested in
 - Open access to final product
-
- Think about: 1, 3, 25

Tips for dissemination – engaging the third sector

- Yes: Involve us in advisory groups. It might help with dissemination. But don't be surprised if the voluntary sector says no. You need to start costing participation into budgets including day rates.
- If you want us on an advisory group, make it easy/quick.
- Better to involve us as project partners and engage us in doing/supporting dissemination

Tips for dissemination – engaging the third sector

- Work with organisations like ILC-UK to disseminate your messages (ESRC project)
- Come to us with ideas
- Be as accessible as possible. ie respond to emails! (e.g. speaking requests)
- Think about what will get attention

I have said yes to...

- I've just written my PHD in X. Its relevant to the news/policy agenda. I'm keen to get it into the hands of policy makers. Will you let me write it as a think piece for your website
- I've just finished a major piece of research. Can you give me a speaking slot at one of your events
- Can we write a joint project on X
- Can I write a guest blog for your website

What not to do

Dear David

I hope you are well.

I've just written my PHD looking at why older people stop going to watch football matches.

Let me know what you think.

David

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My response

Dear Tim

Thanks so much. It looks an interesting topic. I'll have a read.

Best wishes

David

What I mean?

Dear Tim

Thanks so much (aargh – another email. I really havent got time to read this). I'll have a read. (aargh – its 100 pages and 10mb). There is absolutely no chance I will read this. I am on a train. Perhaps I will forward it to Lyndsey and ask her to print it for me so it sits in the pile with all of the others.

Best wishes

David

PS What do you want me to do?

The best approaches

- Tell target audience why it is relevant
- Are short
- Tell target why it is relevant to public policy
- Tell target what you want me to do/think I should do
- Don't expect target to read 100 pages
- Plain English
- Get to the staff!

- Are clear how evidence based/legitimate your research is
- Think about when might be convenient for target
- Don't chase 6 hours later
- Find someone who knows target
- Play to ego (I loved your speech/That was a great report)
- Grab target at an event

Many thanks

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