

Hackney Senior

By older people, for older people • September 2020

**COMMUNITY
GARDEN**
Sharing skills
& stories

LONELY TOWN
Ageing in a
pandemic

**BLACK LIVES
MATTER**
A global movement

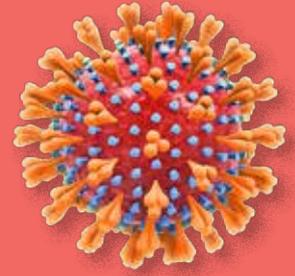
SCHIZOPHRENIA
Mental illness
in lockdown

**HACKNEY SOCIAL
RADIO**
Young at heart

Real-life stories
and reports
by Hackney
over 50s

Coronavirus

What if you get ill?



If the NHS think you have coronavirus, they may tell you to

- * Stay at home
- * Avoid people
- * Plan for 2 weeks

Self Isolation



Ask someone to do your shopping

Closed

Tell people not to come in your house or room



Keep toilets, bathrooms and towels clean



Wash your hands a lot



If you are worried
DO NOT go to your GP
Stay home and phone
NHS 111

See more at <https://hackney.gov.uk/coronavirus-vulnerable>

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About us

Hackney Senior is produced as part of Connect Hackney – one of 14 programmes in England funded through the National Lottery Community Fund's Ageing Better programme.

Connect Hackney commissions services and social activities from local charities and community organisations for residents aged 50+. The services and activities are provided to help older people stay connected and active and lead fulfilling lives.

Find out more at: www.connecthackney.org.uk

Thank you! With thanks to everyone who contributed to this edition of Hackney Senior.

If you, or someone you know, would like to be added to our mailing list to receive Hackney Senior for FREE, please email your name and address to: zelina@connecthackney.org.uk or call her on 07958 168 893.

Tell your story

If you have a story to tell, e: matt@connecthackney.org.uk or send by post to

Matt Bray
Connect Hackney
The Adiaha Antigha Centre
24 – 30 Dalston Lane
London, E8 3AZ

All articles represent the views of their authors and not necessarily those of Connect Hackney or its partners.



Lunch Clubs Hackney

Nearly all the lunch clubs have opened up again for their members to return, with limited numbers of members attending and limited social activities to ensure safe social distancing. All lunch clubs have safety precautions in place including use of face masks, hand sanitisers, and regular cleaning and disinfecting the premises.

For general information about lunch clubs please contact the **Hackney Lunch Clubs Coordinator Suj Ahmed: 07983 169 921, suj@hcv.org.uk**

A NEW WEEKLY RADIO PROGRAMME FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART

Tune in Wednesdays at 11am on
Resonance 104.4FM or online via
www.resonancefm.com



- ★ Music request & audience phone-ins
- ★ Stories from the community
- ★ Special features from local artists
- ★ Interviews & advice from experts
- ★ Regular, up to date information about where to access help & support



Got a request or an idea for a feature?

Contact us on **0207 923 8362** or email
hsr@immediate-theatre.com

For more information visit www.immediate-theatre.com/work/hackney-social-radio



by C H Daniel, 06-07-20

Where shall I begin? I am a seventy year old man. I do not drink very much and I do not smoke, but I suffer with schizophrenia. On this journey of time as well as memory there are obstacles to overcome. So I shall just give you a brief outline of my last episode of mental struggle with this illness in lockdown.

As an individual who lives on his own, I am used to periods of isolation. But it is not good for me not to have any contact with other people as I am rather shy and have difficulty in confidence to speak. Too much isolation though can cause me to withdraw into myself. I wish to point out that I was very lucky to have some very kind neighbours who did my shopping for me. I was also blest with some loving friends who kept in touch – a real lifeline of love.

At the beginning of the lockdown I was already a bit under the weather and had previous periods of tiredness caused by the fact that I had some heart problems whereby I had been given some medication to take along with my other medicines. This tiredness had persisted all the way through lockdown. Here was my dilemma each day – I was feeling weaker and tired; the fact that at the beginning of lockdown, we were only allowed

out once a day for exercise. This made it worse as my sleep pattern was also getting confused. Soon I was sleeping too much during the day and insomnia during the night. I did not report this to my doctor for months as I did not wish to cause a fuss. My mental state was getting worse though and that was what was worrying me. At night when I could not sleep I listened to the radio to drown out my negative thoughts. I tried changing the time of my medicines to help me sleep. I even tried Nytol tablets to no avail.

By the time of the end of lockdown I was very shattered and irritable. I eventually phoned my surgery for help and the very nice receptionist said she would get the doctor to ring me. The doctor prescribed me some sleeping tablets and advised me also to increase my dosage of my other tablets, which I did. The first week was not too good, the second week was better. When

the sleeping tablets ran out though I was ill again and I could not understand why. I thought long and hard and decided to take a chance and increase my mental tablets once more.

Strangely enough it did make a difference, certain symptoms disappeared but other symptoms came to trouble me. I have suffered from this illness for over 40 years and I have found there is no one way of dealing with it. There are phobias and fears that abound in your mind. You consciously have to be on your guard and be very well disciplined. So I found myself in a situation whereby I had to speak to my doctor over the phone and to somehow convey my symptoms and get the right diagnosis in order to get some leeway to cure the problem.

Unfortunately there is always a dilemma with mental illness. A patient has to have trust in their doctor and a certain faith in the medicine over their whole life on which they will be dependent.

Now I have come yet again to a passage of uncertainty of another journey of trust in my doctor, faith in the diagnosis and eternal hope for the future. The fight goes on for many patients now.

Black Lives Matter

The Connect Hackney media group recently met on Zoom to discuss the Black Lives Matter movement. Hosted by media group facilitator, Natasha Julien.

Natasha: What are your thoughts on the movement?

Margaret: I was surprised how a lot of different nationalities, a lot of white people and others, were involved – it was like an international movement really.

Natasha: Yes, it's gone global, hasn't it? We've seen all the protests going on during the pandemic, which I think a lot of people were really worried about.

Margaret: Yes, well people were prepared to take the risk with the virus and come out and protest.

Susan: That was very powerful – at that stage people were really staying in.

Florence: I'm happy it's gone to this stage where it becomes more international because the Black Lives Matters was affecting only Caribbean people and neglecting people of African heritage. So what is going on – I can see it as a more unifying protest.

The movement

Natasha: For this campaign to be successful, for it to be more than a slogan, what does it need to achieve?

Florence: To correct institutional racism embedded in the system. I can remember looking at children that would pass through the primary education,

especially our male children, and you could count how many went through to post primary education. We need our boys, as we need our girls as well. Our male children should have that equal access to education which is coming up now and you can see the difference. You go to the Metropolitan University before, you would hardly see male students of black origin, but now it's improving and now with that demonstration, I feel it's becoming more global.

Susan: It's really multi-faceted and you've got to be prepared to challenge yourself and challenge what's happening at every level. You need the big institutions to be behind you, because you start to see people being better represented, more people at university, and you want that to be followed all the way through so that people are really getting into power and changing things and leading the change.

Florence: If we don't give them (young people) the opportunity, they are not going to grow to do it. Once you eliminate them, or you label a particular race, then you won't have that race turning up in the government. Our children of this generation... their thinking is broader than the way we think, because they travel more, they get



together more than we did. I can see something more successful coming up gradually.

Windrush

Natasha: The Windrush scandal has shown how the system in itself was perpetuating the inequality that has been felt by black people in the UK.

Ann: I'm white, but I'm absolutely ashamed to think that we still live in a society like this. I know it's not enough to say this, but I think in the eyes of god, every man, woman and child is equal and it doesn't matter where they come from and we have to bring up our families with that type of attitude.

George Floyd

Susan: We get a lot of information through social media. It was so horrific the way that George Floyd died, but the fact that you could see it – there was no hiding it, you saw someone die in front of you. It's so shaming this can be happening.

Natasha: It's really confronting the brutality isn't it?

Florence: It's the age of technology that has really helped now. When it happened, everyone saw it and everyone's still seeing it and they can't hide it.



© Ehimetalor Akhere Unuabona on Unsplash

Lockdown as a result of Covid-19, the advantages & disadvantages

by Abigail Omalde, summer 2020

Advantages of lockdown

Time to rest – during the lockdown. I have had time to rest from chores, going and visiting friends. I wish that I can spend a few days at home not doing anything but relaxing and resting my body. The lockdown has enabled me to do this.

Reflection – it has allowed me to pray, read the Bible and reflect on my life, my journey thus far and where I am going. We move from one task to the other without finding time to reflect on what we have done and whether we need to make adjustments. I have been able to find me, away from children and grandchildren and busyness.

Catch up – I have been able to catch up with people I haven't spoken to in a while and have meaningful conversations that are not rushed or time bound.

Study – I have been able to read books that have been on my bookshelves for a long time but I haven't had time to read.

Tidy up – I have been able to tidy up my room, clothes and shoes. I have clothes that I haven't used in a long time that I can give to charity.

Cook – I have been able to cook more, especially my favourite Nigerian dishes. I have also perfected and learnt new dishes and teach my daughter.

Quality time – I have been able to spend quality time with my daughter and share happy moments and support her.

Disadvantages of lockdown

Family – I have not been able to see some of my children and my dear grandchildren. I miss them. Although we speak on the phone, it is not the same as seeing my grandchildren face to face and playing with them.



Voluntary work – I have not been able to do voluntary work and visit friends during the lockdown. The lockdown has prevented social interaction which is essential for some of my friends who don't have family members living close by and patients in hospice.

Exercise – I have not been able to do outdoor exercise which I need and enjoy. I would swim and go to the leisure centre twice a week before the lockdown.

Weight – I have put on weight as I can't go outdoors and exercise and/or do activity that will help burn the calories from cooking and trying out new recipes.

Boredom – I am trying to keep active with activities to do so that I don't get bored which can lead to depression and negative thoughts.

Routine – my daily routine has changed because what I would normally do when I go outside of the house, I can't do.

Shopping – I can't go shopping, therefore I am relying on family members to help me buy food and essential items that I need.

Parties – I miss going to parties to celebrate occasions such as birthdays, weddings, christenings. For these occasions, I dress up and go with friends and we dance and enjoy ourselves.

Fear – the longer we stay indoors, it can make you fear going out once the lockdown is lifted as the virus has not stopped and it has been a while since we went out.

Doctors' appointments – some appointments have been delayed and cancelled because of the lockdown. It is affecting some of my friends who are waiting for operations, therefore they are taking pain killers until they can get a new appointment.

Things to do during lockdown – the comedy course

by Elizabeth Galloway

During lock down, I don't know about you, but my main contact with people was over the telephone or via zoom. The only other contact with others was shopping deliveries or if I heard the bin men outside.

I had previously been receiving newsletters from a comedy group inviting me to comedy development classes, but before lockdown the courses had been clashing with other events in my life.

During lockdown they sent me an invitation to join a comedy course on the 28 April and funnily enough, there were no clashes. It was also obviously on zoom so easier to participate.

The course was for 6 weeks, with a final online performance on the 8 June, where we would each give a five minutes performance to an audience of our friends and family.

During the six classes, which took place in the evenings, we were being trained to develop material and preparing ourselves for performing in front of an audience. It gave us the opportunity to try out our material and get

feedback from the teacher and other participants.

We talked about comedy techniques, rants, terminology and delivery. Also, comedians and their particular style and how they use this to connect with the audience.

We prepared our material from subjects we chose under three headings: things I love, things I hate, things I wish I had.

We started with a group of seven and one person dropped off and then we were six. At first we were all very shy around speaking about any topics in public and being vulnerable.

However, as the time went by we became more courageous and open. We became able to give and take the feedback and use it productively in our performance.

It started to feel like I was visiting friends at their home and having conversations around our favourite topics and everyone



just giving their opinion on that particular topic. It gave me something to look forward to every week and it felt like I was going out to meet friends.

We became a little community and have remained in contact on WhatsApp and are planning a face to face meet up in October.

How have I used this training in my life? Apart from my five minute performance at the end of the course, I have completed a 20 minute performance for a few friends. I also have an hour Eventbrite comedy event that two of my friends have organised for me on the 19 September.

Watch this space...





“LONELY TOWN”

by Harold Werner Rubin, 24/07/2020

AGEING IN A PANDEMIC

I think of the beautiful Leonard Bernstein song, “Lonely Town” from the musical “On the Town”, lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green. “A town’s a lovely town... A million faces pass before your eyes... Still, it’s a lovely town”.

London can be a “lovely town”, especially when it is less crowded and when the sky is blue and the air clean. A rare benefit of the long lockdown. Another beneficial change is the increase in friendliness and the help offered by strangers to other strangers. Sadly, it is naïve to think this behaviour is being followed by all people and that it will permanently be continued by the present practitioners. Memory fades more quickly with the youthful than with the aged, unless that memory is impaired.

Hackney Senior is directed at the senior population. It has become a fact that the larger number of persons soon will be senior citizens. How we conduct ourselves and what are our

requirements after we achieve the most basic ones, housing and food? Mental and physical activity, social contact, mobility and later in life education. Friendships in person and virtual ones with social media. These have all gone through changes, likely accelerated by the pandemic, but inevitable as a form of “progress”.

A new form of friendship

I am nearing the halfway mark of my tenth decade. I am reasonably active but have to cope with health and ageing problems. My mind is more active than my body. The major changes in my activities are staying house bound and communing with fewer people. My love of entertaining and feeding people has been severely curtailed. It has been supplanted by other forms of contact such as mobile phones, email and computer visual aids. I find a new form of friendship has grown with these. I have been fortunate as a single man without family, to have a great

many friends and acquaintances repeatedly checking on my welfare. From this and offering help casual acquaintances have developed with a new form of intimacy. In older fiction and fact there were tales of friends who never met but kept through correspondence a near love affair. I do not say this is happening at present, however, I will describe some of my own experiences and the friendships that have grown during the pandemic.

I am pleased that with my talkative manner and curiosity about people I find making acquaintances quite easy and I like to let them develop into friendships if they will.

This has come to mind from the series of interviews I have done for Justice Studio on the theme of age in the pandemic. The interviewees were told to keep those interviewed anonymous. The subjects were persons over 70 years of age and had suffered illness before the lockdown. The study was to find how they

managed and what reactions they had to self isolating.

Two nonagenarians

My main subject was a gentleman of 90, widowed, living alone, had suffered a stroke leaving him with restricted movement. He is lucid, well spoken, intelligent and as active as possible considering his and the present situations. He misses companionship very much as he had been active with sport, travel and visiting theatre. He is not very interested in haute cuisine and has a rather limited diet that depends on delivered meals and a bit of marketing. He is not very interested in cooking for himself as he never had and obviously is not buying into the new bread baking fraternity. Our three talks were an hour long. I found it very interesting probing a stranger with questions normally not part of social intercourse. He responded well and as I concluded the third and final interview I asked if I might from time to time make brief calls to see how he was and continue our chat. He agreed. If these talks do continue, we will never likely meet face to face as we are two nonagenarians from very different backgrounds with dissimilar interests. However, ours has become a friendship, with mutual trust based on being frank and truthful.

Surviving the pandemic

A friend I have become close to with our frequent telephone and email conversations is a lady of 70 years who is a successful businesswoman running a complex company. She lives with her husband, 2 dogs and is in contact with her sons and their families. Her husband is

suffering the onset of dementia and requires her care. She has a chronic ailment and within the past 6 months has had a heart valve replacement and surgery. She has been coping with all of this which would be difficult, made so much worse by the pandemic. I am not afraid to cross boundaries when someone needs help. I have become her confidant and adviser offering tough advice and the support that I believe she needs.

My most difficult friend to keep is one of many years. An octogenarian from the island of Grenada, he has been a dancer, an actor and a published writer. He lives alone in a council flat and has become dependent on care visitors, but they are very erratic. He does get about a bit for shopping and getting cash. I try to phone him weekly to see how he is faring. He does have some social media but does not manage it at all well, blaming breakdowns. He is cheerful when we speak, but I sense confusion in his conversation. I fear he is coming to a sad finish, he needs and receives medical care. In another time, he might have accepted being taken into care or received care in home, presently he is rationed with such help as he receives.

Another friend of a long time is a successful entrepreneur who sold his large firm and hoped that in his 70s he could afford a restful retirement. He is in a happy relationship following a divorce with children both of his own and his partner's. The



chains that bound him to his former business could not be loosened during the past few years. The new owners of this international business needed his expertise and he spoke to me that always in time he would let go. Now after some illness he is back at work trying to maintain the business during the pandemic. He has a keen sense of responsibility for his former firm, but more than keeping it functioning as an entity he cares for the many employees he fears will become jobless.

The people I have become closest to and ones I actually see are very helpful to me in my solitude. A vigorous couple who are officially retired in their 60s but still hard working. Their generosity to a number of older people is understated and genuine, not looking for kudos or reward. I know they were this way before Covid-19, but so much more-so presently.

There are lessons to take from these examples of survival in a pandemic. The bad will go in time, would that the good will remain.

HAROLD UNLIMITED: Do you have a question or an idea to share with Harold? Subjects may include cookery, ageing, art and more. Email: haroldwernerrubin@gmail.com



An August Morning

by Carron D Adams,
August 11, 2020

Summer is preparing to take her leave. In the 15 minutes since coming out to the garden with my cup of mint tea, the hum of traffic has increased. The world is awake. Those no longer working from home encased in their cars making their way to who knows where. Life goes on.

The garden is green, my brother called it lush. Cherry tomatoes in abundance. These same tomatoes have been a constant source of amusement this summer. Wrongly labelled 'beef tomatoes' I quickly realised they were the smallest beef tomatoes known to humanity. They're sweet and abundant. The air is cool as it occasionally brushes my skin.

The purple hibiscus that lives in a tub has gifted new blooms.

The old ones are fading but still beautiful in their own right. Once more I feel the breath of the soft breeze. The hibiscus brings back memories of an August spent with my now 90 year old aunt in New York. I admired them that summer from the bedroom window, amazed at their simple and somehow open beauty. I fell in love with them.

Fast forward my return to the UK. I've parked my car in Lidl's and about to enter the store. What greets me? The same flowers. I bought four. Only three survived. This year, the year of Covid-19, they've thrived like never before. These flowers that link me not only to my aunt, but to the land of my birth, have shown unflinching beauty.

Bees are already about their daily business. This Covid year when Rhona Virus and her cousins have

descended uninvited, my little garden has attracted so many bees. I thought bees were simply bees, but like humans, they too have their varieties. This year the hibiscus and fuchsias have been kept company by the white bottomed bumble bee – *Bombus lucorum* – what a name! These bees have demonstrated what it truly means to be industrious. From morning to late evening, their welcome presence has been felt in this little garden.

From the corner of my eye I notice a spider slowly climbing, ascending, descending. August is a time when I begin to notice them more. Some mornings, a path has to be cleared to walk from the house to the back gate. If not, webs attempt to caress your face and hair. My thoughts are distracted for a moment by the hint of roses. Roses that have bloomed and now wilting due to the ongoing heat. Roses that rarely get their share of water. Still, having been with me more than 25 years, they survive. Resilience personified. Above me a bird silhouetted against the sky glides silently. I hear the soft fall of a dry leaf. On the table beside me sits a garden glove mottled with soil. It poses, palm upwards almost in supplication. A glove that has seen so much this summer.

Beyond the walls of this small sanctuary the noise of the traffic creeps upwards. Next door my neighbour opens her shed door. The lock clicks quietly, then the shuffle of something removed. It's Tuesday. The garden waste truck has arrived ready to remove the remnants of our summer efforts. At the front of the house my two bags of garden 'waste' sit quietly. Waiting.



Scams awareness – keeping safe

Helen Evans from Toynbee Hall joined a Connect Hackney media group zoom conversation and advised the group on how to spot and avoid website and telephone scams.

When might it be a scam?

- If it's too good to be true, someone you don't know contacts you out of the blue – put the alarm bells on!
- If you are asked to give any personal information or details, don't give them! Be alert, it could be a scam. Ignore the caller and hang up. Block their number.
- If you've been asked to transfer any money, don't!
- If you have spotted a scam or if you have been scammed, or if you feel threatened in any way because you won't give them the caller the information they want – just ring the police. If a scammer contacts you, keep a record of it and report it.
- If you have transferred money and afterwards think you have been scammed – if it's within 24 hours then you should contact the police on 101. If you feel threatened, call 999.
- If your account details or your pin have been stolen, contact your bank as soon as possible.
- If a scam comes through the post, report it to the Royal Mail.

Resources

The Citizen's Advice website. Information and advice on scams and an online scams helper – you enter information about the suspected scam and the online tool helps you work out if it's genuine or a scam.

Search online for **Citizens Advice online scams helper tool** and you will find it.

They also have a Scams telephone action line: **0808 250 5050**.

They are open Monday to Friday.

Action Fraud

Action Fraud is the UK's national reporting centre for fraud and cybercrime where you should report fraud if you have been scammed. Telephone 0300 123 2040.

Community Garden, Growing Health, Holly Street

by Kate Greene

As a retired teacher I had lots of time to commit to a project involving gardening and community involvement.

For the past few years myself, Kate Greene, and others, have been growing a variety of veg and flowers at the garden space at the back of Queensbridge Sports and Community Centre in Holly Street, E8.

Reclaiming an overgrown space

I noticed the space was overgrown with mainly ivy and a few shrubs and lots of weeds. Rarely did anyone sit out there or do any gardening and I thought it could be turned into a community growing space and people could meet, socialise and grow plants together.

With a couple of others I applied for a grant to build some raised beds, soil compost etc. Our bid was accepted and we received some money from Hackney Council with which we built 3 raised beds and bought compost, some tools and soil.

I had previously attended classes at The Sharp End, an active retirement project based at the Queensbridge Centre. They were very supportive to my idea of the community growing space and it was named Growing Health Garden, amid a nice tea party open to all the members.

We have been going for 8 years and have extended into the unused ball court where we have built a polytunnel, a shed and more raised beds. We deliver a variety of workshops from growing miniature sedum gardens to making compost.

Increasing happiness

The garden has been a godsend as its maintenance has given me a place to go and engage in purposeful activity during these strange times. It presents opportunities for a sense of community, sharing knowledge skills and our life stories. All of



which relieves stress and increases happiness in these stressful times.

We are open Mondays and Fridays 10.30am -2pm and local residents are especially welcome. Tel. 07908 040760.

Gardening tips – taking cuttings

Late summer, early autumn is a good time to take semi-hardwood cuttings to increase your collection of plants.

You can take a cutting from ivy, hydrangea, roses, rosemary, jasmine or honeysuckle, to name a few.

- Look for a stem with a growing tip and cut with clean sharp secateurs or scissors 4-6" below the tip just below a node (where the leaves grow from)
- Strip the leaves from the lower ½ of the stem, leaving 2 leaves at the top
- Place the cuttings in sterile potting soil with sand
- Cover pot with cuttings with a clear plastic bag
- Place out of direct sunlight

In 2-8 weeks the stem should be rooted and ready to transplant into another pot with compost.

Book Review: Three Things About Elsie by Joanna Cannon

by Elizabeth Galloway

“My mind started to wander. It can’t help itself. It very often goes for a walk without me, and before I’ve realised what’s going on, it’s miles away.”

Elsie and Florence have been friends since they met on the bus as little girls. All the way through school and working in a factory together until they retired. Now they live at Cherry Tree care home for the elderly.

Florence is rather outspoken and the only person who can keep her quiet is Elsie. Florence has been threatened with being moved to another care home (somewhere where she will be less independent) by the Assistant Matron.

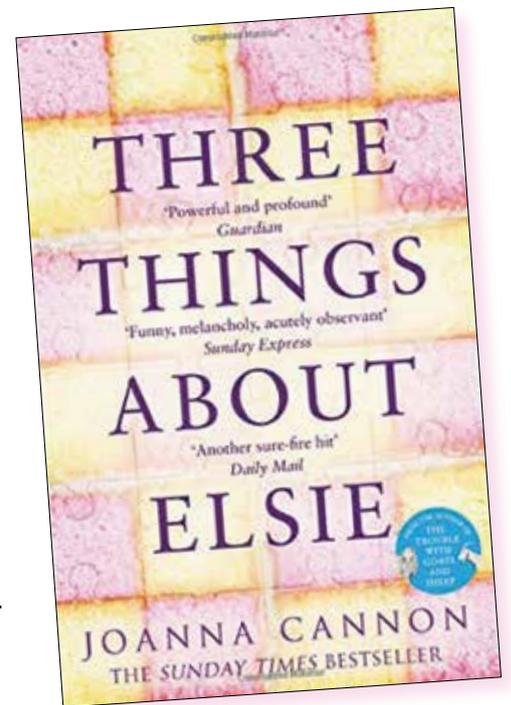
Suddenly for the friends they are living with the fear of being separated. This fear is overtaken by even greater fear, a new resident moves in. He is someone from Elsie and Florence’s past and the fear is he has a different

name and has risen from the dead. There is also a secret that his presence will disclose.

They start spying on this man who seems to be becoming a favourite in the home. They feel in danger and must move fast to reveal his true identity before he shuts them up permanently.

They engage the help of another resident, Jack, and suddenly it’s Jessica Fletcher, Miss Marple and M. Poirot meet the Kray twins.

Their investigation takes the whole of Cherry Tree to Whitby, somewhere that the ladies had spent time in their youth. What they find out is very interesting and involves other residents of Cherry Tree and connections that link most of them.



One of the things about Elsie is “she always knows what to say to make Florence feel better.”

You will have to read the book to find out what the other two things are and the very surprising ending.

HACKNEY LIBRARIES

Hackney libraries are not yet open to the public but they are offering a reserve and collect service.

To reserve an item

You can reserve and collect items from the following libraries:

Clapton: 020 8356 7480

Dalston CLR James: 020 8356 8935

Homerton: 020 8356 1066

Shoreditch: 020 8356 4351

Stamford Hill: 020 8356 1708

Stoke Newington: 020 8356 5235

Community Library

Any Hackney resident can use the service on a temporary or long-term basis. There are no age restrictions. The main criteria is that you cannot access a library because of an accident, illness, frailty, disability or because you are a carer.

The community library delivers on a monthly rota basis, to people in their own homes, sheltered blocks and nursing homes.

Telephone

Renewals: 020 8356 2539

General: 020 8356 3000

An interview with Patricia Charlesworth

by Matt Bray

MB: Where were you born?

PC: I was born in London, seventy three years ago. The doctors said that I wouldn't walk, I wouldn't talk, I'd just lie there like a vegetable and the best thing (for my parents) to do was to put me away and get on with their life and have other children. My parents didn't do that.

MB: How does that make you feel looking back?

PC: If you'd asked me that years ago, I probably would have answered differently. I don't go on about it too much because not everybody has the same beliefs, but I believe it was a miracle. I don't believe the doctor got it wrong, I believe there was a miracle – I wasn't meant to have a severe and multiple learning difficulty.

I think I was meant to have a learning disability yes, because that was god's way of using me – we've all got gifts, every single one of us. I don't know what my gift is...probably talking too much!

MB: Do you think that adults with learning disabilities are recognised for the contribution they make to society?

PC: I think they are now a bit more than they were – there's still a long way to go. All this business with Covid and the hospitals. When that doctor in Wales put do not resuscitate orders on people's files without even talking with anybody, with the person with the learning disability or the parents



or carer, and I reckon it happened to elderly people as well – people who they think aren't valued in this world.*

I'm sorry, I'm getting really cross. It's so important that we reach our full potential, because we have got so much to give to society and we have a responsibility in that – to show people we can do the same things as they do, but we need a little more support.

MB: Do you think adults with learning disabilities have been supported during the pandemic?

PC: No I don't, not just people with learning disabilities, elderly people, elderly people with learning disabilities have suffered through this.

MB: The number of adults with learning disabilities that have died is disproportionately high isn't it?

PC: In my own mind I reckon they are higher, I wouldn't be surprised.

MB: What needs to be put in

place in case there is a second wave of Coronavirus?

PC: They have to make sure they have the right staff and the right equipment. Some of these people are so vulnerable – people with severe and multiple learning difficulties. Unless they've got the carers that actually care about them as human beings – we need devoted people... but the money that carers get paid is terrible.

MB: Thanks Patricia. Final question, what are your plans for the future?

PC: To be who I am, to give to society as much as I can. I'm getting older now, you'll find as you get older, the things you do now, you won't be able to do. Your mind will be extremely active, but your body won't cooperate – it's frustrating, very frustrating! I get very cross – I find getting cross quite easy!

*The Ham and High reported in September that the coronavirus pandemic has been especially challenging for families with a member with learning disabilities, autism or mental illness.

They report that Charities such as Turning Point and Learning Disability England are taking up cases in the courts, with the former saying in some cases a diagnosis of autism or learning disabilities has been considered reason to impose a DNR order, without consultation with families.



My spiritual journey over the past months

by Margaret Smith

From this July, after about 4 months of being closed, churches are open for services again.

Yesterday I took the bus to Victoria and went to Westminster Cathedral to attend a mass there. Being in the cathedral was a really wonderful experience for me. I always try and attend church every Sunday. Like so many people, I really missed the gathering in the sacredness of our church spaces during lockdown and the practice of being together with my faith community.

During lockdown, churches and their clergy did so much to try to adapt and to help us worship, and I am so grateful for that.

So many churches started streaming their services on Youtube or Facebook so that we could worship online. It is so fortunate that there is technology which has been such a great support and which really helped the Church get through lockdown.

During lockdown, I listened to masses online on Sundays. My local church is St Michaels of Wood Green and they also offered Bible study classes via Zoom. They offered coffee mornings via Zoom at midday each Sunday morning after the recorded mass. Our vicars also phoned all parishioners

regularly once every 2 weeks to check in with us and ensure we were all doing ok. I really enjoyed my fortnightly chat with my local vicar.

Without a doubt the fact of having to stay indoors with so many shops and venues being closed from March-July made many of us feel stranded, demoralised and worried.

However, many of us also found that we had extra time to spare and we used that extra time during lockdown to turn to contemplation. So many people created a spiritual retreat at home and spent time praying, reading the Bible and trying to increase their faith. I remember a homily in one of the online services around May where my local vicar encouraged us to pray, pray, pray.

Some people have emerged from the past 4 months with a revitalised sense of faith which they want to take forward into the future.

As well as reading the Bible and praying, I also think that people can connect with spirituality in other ways. You can feel spiritual contemplating or relaxing in nature; during lockdown we were strongly encouraged to use our gardens and outdoor spaces. You can also feel spiritual reading an absorbing book or personal

journal or listening to some moving music.

I discovered Carly Paoli, a classical singer who was No 1 in the classical charts during lockdown. I found it very spiritual to listen to her songs.

The Christian religion teaches us to be compassionate to one another and it is so important to be kind to others. During lockdown we were encouraged to check on a friend or neighbour, some people volunteered dropping groceries and prescriptions off to the elderly and vulnerable. We all remember the kindness of now Sir Major Tom Moore who at age 100 raised over £30 million for the NHS by walking 100 laps of his garden. My mum and I donated £10 to Great Ormond Street Hospital during lockdown. One thing that has really been noticeable during lockdown is our strong community spirit.

I am so glad the churches are open again. Guidelines are still in place to comply with social distancing requirements – for example at St Michaels at Wood Green each mass is limited to 35 people for now. However, these are the first steps in the process of the churches getting back to normal, steps which are welcomed by clergy and by parishioners. It is in that regard a time of rejoicing.

Connect Hackney Round up

Connect Hackney partners have been adapting their services to the current situation. Get in touch with them for the latest updates.

African Health Policy Network

'Santé Sage (Wise Health)' project is for Hackney's African Francophone communities aged 50 and over.

Contact Maureen: 07960 857 286

Bring The Outside In at Anchor Hanover Housing

Supports the wellbeing of its residents.

Contact: 0775 310 0322

City and Hackney Carers

Current support includes telephone befriending, practical & emotional support, and online zoom dance exercise classes for carers.

Contact: 0208 533 0951

https://twitter.com/Hackney_Carers

Coffee Afrik 'Somali Elders Project.

Are continuing to support their community elders with a range of projects.

Contact Coffee Afrik on 07984 526 489

Friends of Woodberry Down (FOWD)

Finding alternative ways to contact & include over 50s including those who have no access to a computer with chair based exercise via video call and birthday sing alongs for members by phone.

Contact Amanda Inniss on 0787 634 5457 /

Tracey Boothe 0785 232 8993

Hackney Chinese Community Services

Despite centre being closed since lockdown, HCCS continue to provide an outreach service to the Chinese and Vietnamese communities.

If you need support getting food or essentials or if you need advice, telephone HCCS on: 020 8986 6171

Hackney Community Transport:

Free minibus loan for Hackney community groups. Any member organisation who wants to use a minibus to transport food, medicines and other

supplies to vulnerable people in the community can do so – free of charge.

Also, HCT would love to speak to anyone interested in signing up with them as a volunteer to drive vehicles to help out those in need.

Contact: 020 7275 2414

Hackney Co-operative Developments

Support men aged over 50 that use Gillett Square. Unable to organise face to face activity currently due to the pandemic.

Contact HCD for updates: Anja Beinroth on 020 3875 9352

Newham New Deal Partnership

Continue to provide dementia support services and the @online club in Hackney.

Phone 0203 383 0111 / 020 7366 6343

Peter Bedford Housing Association

Work with vulnerable & excluded adults in North East London.

Contact them for updates of current services www.peterbedford.org.uk

Contact: 020 3815 4100

Mind in the City, Hackney & Waltham Forest

Run an infoline where you can discuss mental health problems, where to get help near you, treatment options and advocacy services.

Contact: 0300 123 3393 (Monday-Friday, 9am-6pm)

MRS Independent Living

Hackney Dudes drop-in and outings are currently suspended until further notice due to the ongoing coronavirus outbreak and social distancing restrictions. We are hosting virtual drop-ins using Zoom, please contact Vicky Harrison to find out how to join.

Vicky.Harrison@mrsindependentliving.org or phone 0330 380 1013

Shoreditch Trust

There is so much going on this autumn; from walks, to outdoor groups and online events. Book

in advance, keep 1-2 metres apart during activities. use hand gel, or wash your hands on arrival.

e: info@shoreditchtrust.org.uk

Contact: 020 7033 8501 or 020 7033 8587

St Mary's Secret Garden

St Mary's Secret Garden is currently closed to all but booked appointments apart from on Tuesday and Friday mornings. Open for socially distanced

plant sales on Tuesdays and Fridays 10am – 1pm.

Contact: 020 7739 2965

Turkish Cypriot Cultural Association

Support for Turkish and Kurdish elders – the association has adapted their services to support elders during the pandemic.

Contact: 020 7249 7410

What's on & HACKNEY SUPPORT SERVICES

Beersheba – Living Well

Peer support for vulnerable adults and older people from African, Caribbean and mixed heritage communities living with underlying health needs. Beersheba are delivering 1:1 mentoring by telephone, group learning workshops and gentle exercise sessions online. Tel: 07972 603 026

Core Arts/CoreSport

Online zoom sessions in physical activity: yoga, dance, boxfit, circuit training, chair based aerobics, plus creative classes in music, art and textiles. All classes are free to those who have been referred. Contact Laura-Jane Connolly on 07881228009

Choice in Hackney

Advocacy and independent living services for disabled people, from disability and hate crime advocacy, to volunteering and active lifestyle activities. Tel: 020 7613 8130

Engage Hackney

Supporting people over the age of 18 who are in need of temporary accommodation and/or have housing related support needs. Tel: 0800 953 4044

Hackney Foodbank

Providing nutritionally balanced emergency food and support to local people who need it.

Tel: 020 7254 2464

Hoxton Health

Will be open again in a Covid-safe environment from the beginning of November offering low cost acupuncture, osteopathy, foot health. Appointments will be taken from October.

Call 020 7729 2533

Theatre Exchange

Mondays 5.30 -7.15pm – currently on Zoom, but hoping to return to Dalston Library in the Autumn. Join the group who are developing ideas and content for Hackney Social Radio and working on an entertainment for Christmas. For further information please contact jo@immediate-theatre.com or call Hackney Soical Radio on 020 7923 8362

To list your service in Hackney Senior, please phone 07958 168 893 and ask for Zelina or email: zelina@connecthackney.org.uk



We are still
HEAR TO HELP
and support you

Hear2Help are still here and currently supporting people remotely through providing **batteries, tubing and advice** on hearing aids, hearing loss and tinnitus.

We are able to communicate to people via phone, email, WhatsApp and Zoom.

For more information, contact Sharon James

✉ Sharon.James@hearingloss.org.uk ☎ 07551063742

🌐 www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Action on Hearing Loss is the trading name of The Royal National Institute for Deaf People. A registered charity in England and Wales (207720) and Scotland (SC038926)

Hackney Social Radio

Young at heart



In response to the pandemic, Hackney's Immediate Theatre set up a radio station. Broadcasting weekly on Wednesdays, programmes have a magazine style, featuring interviews, music requests, audience phone-ins and up-to-date information about where to access help and support. We spoke to artistic director of Immediate Theatre, Jo Carter, to find out more.

HS: You chose young at heart as the strapline for the radio show, where did that come from and what does it tell us?

Jo: We tried lots of different titles – people were quite clear that they didn't want it to say it was for older people, because what does that mean? We tried using the term 'silver society' but a lot of people objected. Then Catherine, a recent member of the theatre group, said, "What about young at heart?" We said, "Great, thank you – we will have that!"

HS: How do you think the radio show has helped Hackney elders during the pandemic?

Jo: There are two elements to that. A lot of people have been involved in participating, not only the core group of people who look at the ideas and then present the programme, but also the people who are in the features. People who had meals delivered to them were interviewed as part of a feature. I think those people felt they could share their story and they felt empowered and useful rather than cut off.

The second element is our audience and how we help people. Lots of people were very worried about occupying the NHS with other (non Covid-19) issues. I think that was a big problem. After Dr Cahill did her first radio chat and said, "We are

open for business, do come back". A lot of people said, "Oh, I really hadn't realised that, I was really trying not to bother my doctor". That was a very direct way we helped.

Telling people that things are kind of reopening, how to get help from Hackney Council. Obviously so much information these days is online – letting people know there are telephone numbers as well as internet addresses has been very helpful.

HS: What have been the best features, the most exciting or heart-warming?

Jo: The one about Carib Eats. (Carib Eats deliver weekly meals to isolated residents). It was one of the first ones where Justin, a radio producer, just went out to meet people.

He interviewed the person who set the organisation up – it was set up entirely in response to Covid-19. He went out with the Carib Eats volunteers and met a woman whose sister wrote a poem about a Caribbean lady. She had breast cancer and felt her neighbours were not interested in her and couldn't talk to her.

She was completely cut off from her family and was shielding and she appreciated the fact that Carib Eats bought food to her. This experience was expressed through a poem. That was

lovely because it was bringing together a story and art and this tremendous response of just local ordinary people.

HS: Is there anything else do you think the audience would like to know?

Jo: We haven't mentioned our DJ who is called Frank Chaos. He is 78 and suffering from emphysema, but his knowledge and love of music and his ability to say something about every track with your request...he is so passionate about music and I do think music is a very important element.

He is also very much an activist and he wants change. So at any point he will come and say 'come on government, we need change'.

HS: If people wanted to get involved and tell their story, how can they do that?

Jo: They can contact us at hsr@immediate-theatre.com or telephone 020 7923 8362

HS: How can people listen and when?

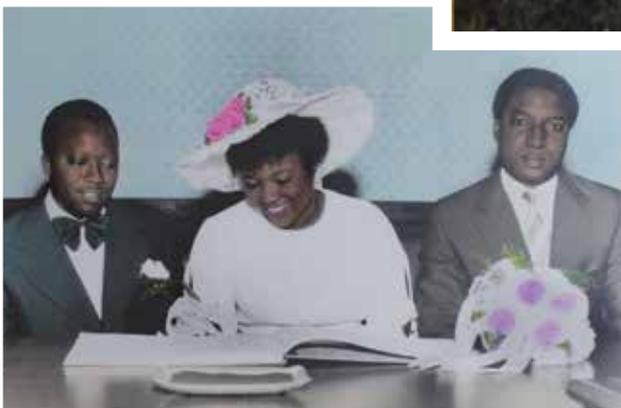
Jo: Wednesdays 11 am to 12 pm on 104.4 FM

To listen to previous broadcasts online, go to: <https://www.immediate-theatre.com/work/hackney-social-radio>

A trip down memory lane...

Over the past five and a half years, the Connect Hackney media group have produced and featured in Hackney Senior magazine, the Windrush Commemorative Booklet and podcasts and the Diversity Commemorative Booklet and films. You can see more online at www.connecthackney.org.uk

For more info contact Matt Bray: matt@connecthackney.org.uk | 07983 169 961





DIRECTORY

AGE UK EAST LONDON

The Age UK phone line **020 89817124** is now open from 9am – 6pm 7 days a week.

If you need advice or support, Age UK will help you or signpost you to a relevant person or organisation.

DERMAN

Provides talking therapies for the Turkish-speaking community. Call **020 7613 5944**

BIKUR CHOLIM

Provides talking therapies for the Charedi community. Call **020 8800 7575**

City of London Social Services

Call **0207 606 3030** and ask for Adult Social Care.

The Silver Line

Need help? Call ANYTIME ON: 0800 470 80 90

For older people providing fee confidential information, friendship and advice Open 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

DOMESTIC ABUSE – HOW TO GET HELP

In an emergency, call **999**. If it's not safe for you to speak aloud, you can make silent phone calls to the police by dialling 999 and pressing 55 when prompted.

Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired. In case of an emergency, call the **999** textphone on **18000**.

If you aren't in immediate danger, but wish to report domestic abuse to the police, telephone **101**.

SISTAH SPACE

Works with African heritage women and girls who have experienced domestic or sexual abuse. Call **07951 826 878**

National Domestic Abuse Helpline

Freephone 24 hour Helpline number is: **0808 2000 247**

The Samaritans

If you need urgent help, you can call The Samaritans – they offer a safe place for you to talk at any time. They will listen to you and talk through your anxieties and concerns

Tel: **116 123** (Free call)

NHS 111

If you have an urgent medical problem and you're not sure what to do, call **111**. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you have difficulties hearing or communicating, you can use the HNS 111 service through a textphone by calling 18001 111.

PHARMACIES – help accessing prescriptions

If you need prescriptions or medications, ask family, friends or trusted neighbours who are able to collect your medicines from the pharmacy and bring them to you.

If you don't have support, contact your local pharmacy to arrange for your prescription to be delivered.

If you are unable to get through to the pharmacy, call **020 8356 3111** to speak to Volunteer Centre Hackney who will arrange a volunteer to collect and deliver your prescription.

We can help you to use technology:



- to stay in touch with friends and family
- to shop online



Watch our how-to videos and we'll help you get up to speed



Get started: hackney.gov.uk/digital-skills
If you don't have access to the internet, call our coronavirus support helpline: **020 8356 3111**, 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.