**15th September 2018**

**A CELEBRATION OF LATER LIFE**

The UK’s population is getting older. For every 1,000 people aged 16 to 64, there are 285 people aged 65 and over (according to July 2017 Office for National Statistics).

It is the International Day of Older Persons on 1st October, closely followed by ‘Silver Sunday’ on 7th October which is an annual day of fun activities for older people in the UK. To celebrate, Storyhouse, in collaboration with Age UK Cheshire and Brightlife, is holding a ‘Love Later Life’ festival of workshops, theatre, song and wellbeing on 1st and 2nd October and 7th October.

The Love Later Life festival will see a range of fun, creative and informative events all geared towards the over 50’s, all completely **free of charge**. With everything from laughter yoga to later life financial planning, the festival is focused on welcoming older people into the cultural centre and celebrating their wisdom and experience.

Storyhouse Artistic Director, Alex Clifton, said: “Our culture is very biased towards the young. As our population ages, we need to build a society which is kinder, more generous to its elders. We are delighted to be working together with Age UK Cheshire and Brightlife for the Love Later Life festival. There is something for everyone over the three days and I am looking forward to welcoming Chester’s older residents to Storyhouse as they take part in the many and varied activities.”

The event kicks off on Monday 1st October with a Poetry Open Mic in the Garrett Theatre, (slightly ahead of National Poetry Day which is on Thursday 4th October), compered and headlined by Joy France (Nationwide Poetry Campaign 2017).

Cheshire’s 2004 Poet Laureate John Lindley will be taking to the mic along with other performers who have been discovered from some of Brightlife’s projects, including Ray Thompson (90) and Audrey Thomas (90). Over the years Ray has received several accolades for his poems including a letter of thanks from President George Bush. Audrey only discovered a talent for poetry writing when she started attending Brightlife get-togethers in Malpas and credits the project with helping her make new friends and get out of the house.

Dale Maskell, Chief Executive of Age UK Cheshire, said: “We can’t wait to welcome people to the Love Later Life festival at Storyhouse! If there’s a secret to being healthy and happy in later life we believe that staying active, connected, learning new skills and being able to share your life experiences is a major factor.”

Chris McClelland, Head of Brightlife, said: “On its simplest level, it’s about feeling part of something bigger than you. We see time and again how the arts and opportunities for creative expression can help start conversations, open discussions, trigger precious memories or just bring like-minded people together through a fun activity.”

A full programme of activities is available at: <https://www.storyhouse.com/event/love-later-life> or in leaflet format in the Storyhouse foyer.

**ENDS**

**For more information, please contact:** Cath Logan, Brightlife Marketing & Communications Manager on T: 01606 884445 M: 07736 168352 email:[cath.logan@brightlifecheshire.org.uk](mailto:cath.logan@brightlifecheshire.org.uk)

**MEDIA OPPORTUNITY:**

You are welcome to come along and record the Poetry Open Mic on Monday 1st October, 10:30am – 11:30am which may be of interest to coincide with content for your bulletins on National Poetry Day, Thursday 4th October. Please contact Cath when you arrive on-site for a media pass.

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

**Brightlife**

* Brightlife is supported by the Big Lottery Fund with National Lottery funding.
* Brightlife is a partnership led by Age UK Cheshire (Registered Charity Number 1091608). It was awarded £5m as part of the Big Lottery’s Fulfilling Lives, Ageing Better fund, which has given a total of £82m to 14 areas throughout England in order to improve the lives of up to 200,000 older people.
* The Brightlife partnership includes: Age UK Cheshire, Older People’s Network, Cheshire West and Chester Council, West Cheshire CCG, Vale Royal CCG, Cheshire and Warrington Social Enterprise Partnership, Chester Voluntary Action, Deafness Support Network, Rural Community Services, Sanctuary Housing and West Cheshire Inter Faith Forum.
* Brightlife works closely with people aged 50+ to identify, design and implement a wide range of innovative solutions to address loneliness and isolation across Cheshire West and Chester.
* Nationally, over 1 million older people say they are always or often feel lonely, and two-fifths say the television is their main form of company. With the numbers of older people aged 65 or over in the UK predicted to rise by nearly 50% in the next 20 years, loneliness is an urgent problem.

**Ageing Better**

* Ageing Better is a six-year £78 million National Lottery funded programme set up by the Big Lottery Fund to support people in later life through working with older people to create new and enjoyable ways for them to be actively involved in their communities, helping to combat social isolation and loneliness.
* Partnerships based in Birmingham, Bristol, Camden, Cheshire, East Lindsey, Hackney, Isle of Wight, Leeds, Leicester, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Sheffield, Thanet and Torbay put older people in the lead to help shape services that tackle isolation and loneliness.