



**#Age
Proud
Bristol**

People seem to dread getting older, despite evidence that shows we tend to become happier at this stage of life. This comes from a variety of studies looking at the ‘U-Shaped Curve of Happiness’, which found that self-reported happiness levels are often highest in early childhood and later life.

As a part of the Age Proud Bristol campaign, which challenges negative perceptions of older people, Bristol Ageing Better spoke to Ben Barker (81), a BS3 Community activist, about his experience of later life.

“There’s time to do things. You control your own timetable.” says Ben. For Ben, retirement meant he had more time to get involved in his community and follow his interests. “When you work,” says Ben, “Your timetable is controlled by someone else, but I have no such influence now and if I want to set up a hedgehog street for example, or some other community venture, I can.”

There is a common saying that ‘you can’t teach an old dog new tricks’, however this saying has been disproved time and time again as many people try new hobbies or follow new interests when they retire. Ben has been involved in a vast array of community activities since his retirement, from running wildlife groups to social clubs. “I retired early because I wanted to do something else. I enrolled in the Open University - I didn’t last very long but I gave it a go!”

So many stereotypes about older people are taken for granted and if not challenged run the risk of becoming internalised by people as they age, as they believe there are things that they can’t or shouldn’t do because of how old they are.

“Stereotypes are almost always wrong.” says Ben. “We’re all different people and should be treated as such, it’s part of relating to one another as human beings.” Ben believes a way to challenge stereotypes about ageing is to create opportunities for people to mix with others of all ages, and to break down barriers through open conversation.

Find out more about the Age Proud Bristol campaign by visiting www.agefriendlybristol.org.uk or search #AgeProudBristol on Twitter and take part in the conversation about ageism in Bristol.