



Creativity: Fulfilling the Promises of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for Older Persons by Farrell Renowden, October 2023

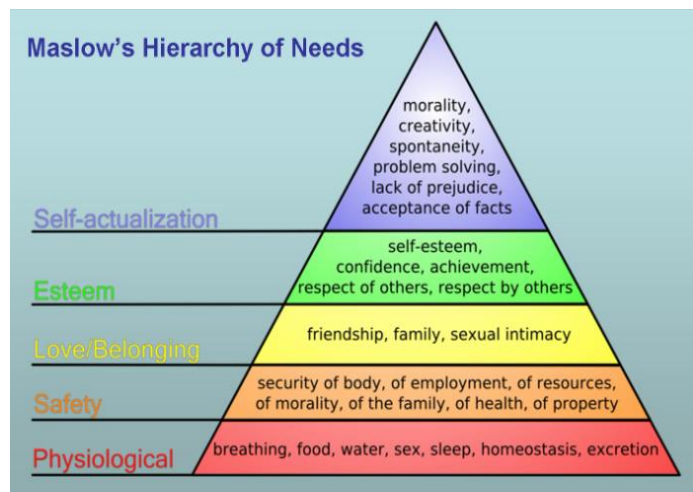
It's amazing to see the return of so many events for this year's [International Day of Older People](#), it is such an important part of our calendar. This year's theme, "Fulfilling the Promises of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for Older Persons" is an interesting one. Human Rights are a topic featuring heavily in UK politics right now, but whatever your position, I imagine "culture" and "the arts" aren't the first Human Rights you think of when discussing issues that impact older people.

Article 27.1 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) states that:

"Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits."

So, it isn't just a Human Right to access a cultural life or the arts, but to "**participate**" and "**enjoy**" them too. It isn't a luxury, or "the icing on the cake" when all the "basics" have been met, but it is a **fundamental** Human Right. I wonder how many people know that, and how much it featured as part of the Older People's Day celebrations? [The Age UK Oxfordshire Creative Team](#) were out in full force, meeting new people across the county, but I wonder how many events featured "enjoying the arts" as part of the focus on Human Rights?

Now, I'm under no illusion that if you can't breathe, you need more support than enjoying the arts, as indicated in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. However, that "hierarchy" (which is fixed in many people's minds and underpins so much of our decision-making around support for older people) has a lot to answer for. I'm not sure that all these needs can be compartmentalised; surely, we can't live a fulfilling life without meeting all of them?



"Prioritisation" is different to going without one of them. Are we saying that "friendship" is a luxury after "food", or that "self-esteem" is less important than "sleep"? Can any of these be described as "less than fundamental" to people of all ages? So why is it that "creativity" is still seen as an indulgence, rather than part of the human condition, and "enjoying the arts" only a reality for **some** older people?

This week I hope that all the Human Rights of all older people are fulfilled, including access to culture and the enjoyment of the arts. We are all ageing, every day, so it is up to each of us to curate the type of life we want to enjoy when we are "older", which should include **all** our Human Rights, nurturing **all** our fundamental needs, with no hierarchy required.

Farrell is the Head of Cultural Partnerships at Age UK Oxfordshire and leads the [Creative Team](#). She is also EDI Champion for Age England Association and Director of the Creative Ageing Development Agency.

Contact: farrell.renowden@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk

