Why creating a framework is worth the effort

You have an idea and know roughly what you want to say, but you need a plan. The simplest plan is a beginning, a middle and an end. Whether your article is 300 words or 3,000, it should start with an indication of its purpose. Build it with supporting evidence or argument and conclude in a way that encourages readers to pause and reflect.

Creating a first draft
Whatever type of article you are planning, jotting down some headings can help give the first draft a logical flow. These headings may be broad, such as 'Introduction', 'Main text', 'Conclusion', but, with three or four bullet points under each heading, your article will quickly take shape.

It often helps to start with the main points in the conclusion that you want readers to take away with them, and then work backwards from there, so that you know where you are leading them.

After all, we plan an unfamiliar journey by establishing the destination first and then working backwards to map it out.

Example
Sheila wants to write a comment article about what she perceives as unthinking ageism that she has witnessed in hospital settings. Her plan for the article so far looks like this:

Introduction

Main text
» What is ageism?
» Ageism and the law and in healthcare.
» An incident in a care setting.
» Suggest practical interventions.

Conclusion
» What does improvement look like and how is it achieved?
» Individual and collective responsibilities.

More detail
A second version of Sheila’s plan includes more detail under each of the bullet points. For example:
» Suggest practical interventions: raising awareness; teaching sessions; poster campaign; informal lunchtime discussions; what matters to older people.

The planning process takes time but will serve you well. It will clarify your thinking and help you to write an article that has a logical flow and a well defined purpose. It also helps you to write to length because you can attribute so many words to different sections.

Work hard on the introduction. Rewrite it until you are certain it has the power to engage and draw in your audience. If your first few sentences are dense and difficult to comprehend, readers are more likely to give up reading.