

The Pensioner

Journal of Brighton & Hove Pensioner Action

No. 43, Winter 2012

Patient Participation Groups – are they glitter or gold?



Pensioner Action has been running a campaign on whether Patient Participation Groups can improve access to GP appointment systems. We ran an event with the Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance on this subject in August.

Getting equal access to GP appointments is the single most frequently raised issue within our Neighbourhood Groups, which are attended by people who find it difficult to go out, and often live in sheltered housing. Older people draw on substantial life experience and as retired civil servants, who have both received and delivered public services. Older people are also over-represented by age band on the many consultative and user-involvement forums, contributing many hours of unpaid input out of a motivation to make a useful contribution to the community.

From April 2013, as part of the requirements of the Health and Social Care Reform Act, GP practices are required to involve their patients in the planning and delivery of their services. Since spring this year, Pensioner Action has been actively encouraging members to join these growing groups and see the benefits of their efforts close at hand. The surveys and this event gave us an opportunity to evaluate some older peoples' experience so far.

Patient Participation Groups are intended to: work with the GP practice to provide practical support, to help patients take responsibility for their own health, and to provide strategic input and advice.

Our August event drew people from different PPGs together with retired public service workers. We remembered past 'involvement' groups which date back to 1972 when the first patient representation groups were founded. And do you remember the Patients' Charter brought in by John Major?

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Patient Participation Group



Pensioner Action
latest public
event report



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Editor's letter

Hello and welcome to the November issue of The Pensioner! I hope you have all had a good year. Winter can be a challenging season for older people and here at Pensioner Action

we will continue to work hard to make sure your views and concerns are heard.

Pensioner Action has had a very busy year so far. We held a number of successful public events over the summer, tackling subjects from mental health to accessing GP surgeries. We also had a busy time running a 'vox pop' video and paper survey from our stall in the Health and Wellbeing Zone on People's Day. It was a fantastic community event full of festivities, music, food, information

and activities for all. The events were well attended by the public and we were lucky enough to have some excellent guest speakers. We have fed your views back to the relevant bodies to help promote the wellbeing of older people in the city. We would like to thank all of you who got involved.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue and continue to help us help you by coming to our events, attending our Neighbourhood Groups and letting us know your views on issues that affect older people in Brighton & Hove.

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The Pensioner is the journal of Pensioner Action, part of Impetus, a registered charity set up to empower local people by championing volunteering and strengthening community and

voluntary organisations. See our website at <http://www.bh-impetus.org/index.php>. We print 4000 copies of the magazine, three times a year. Most of these are delivered free of charge to older people via

care workers, community nurses, sheltered housing and libraries.

Getting a regular copy

For a subscription fee of £5 per annum, a copy of each issue of The Pensioner will be posted to you on publication day, just complete the subscription form on p6 and send it to Mandi Sherratt. Or you can request an email version which we will email you free of charge, just email your request to: mandi.sherratt@bh-impetus.org

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Pensioner Action team

- Sue Howley - Chair of PA
- Peter Lloyd - Chair of Editorial Committee
- Sue Goodwin - PA Service Manager
- Mandi Sherratt - PA Editor and Administrator

Our next public event

27th November - Age-friendly community involvement - does it have any teeth? See page 3 for more details.



Advertise in The Pensioner

The Pensioner is a major means of communication for older people in Brighton & Hove. The editorial work is covered in part by a small grant from the PCT and provided by a voluntary committee. Delivery of copies is largely by volunteers, we have no grant to cover printing costs and we rely heavily on advertising to produce the magazine. We are seeking new advertisers and would greatly welcome local businesses that

provide services for older people to place an advert, our rates are:

- ¼ page advert - £75 (A6: 98mm W x 134.3mm H)
- ½ page advert - £150 (A5 = 200mm W x 142.5mm H (1/2 page))
- Full page advert - £300
- Sponsorship of an issue - £475 (Full back page advert/advertorial plus editorial thanks/acknowledgement)

For more details, contact Mandi Sherratt (details above).

Pensioner Action in action!

Section 1, pages 3 to 5, shows what Pensioner Action has been up to on your behalf, and gives information on upcoming events and our latest campaigns

Patient Participation Groups – are they glitter or gold? *Continued from front page.*

A speaker queried the value of words like: 'Participation, choice, and inclusion' and pointed out that self-selected patients may not be objective enough to be representative of others, and may not reflect the diversity of patients in the practice. He asked how they could be accountable to the other patients in this respect. He said that relations with the GPs are private, not a group experience. He asked who sets the agenda, and what information is actually shared with the PPGs.

One PPG had brought about improvements in the appointment system and the waiting room environment. There were six members of different ages, and the group was chaired effectively by the practice manager. A second PPG had met for nine months, so far producing a 'suggestions box' and a page on their website. A third felt they were unclear about their agenda, and needed more support and an accessible venue. Training and guidance had been offered at several city-wide meetings on PPGs, but information about these was not always received down the line.

Out of the 47 GP surgeries in Brighton and Hove, 44 have patient groups, although many of these are just email groups where there is no interaction and discussion, which seem to bring the best results for genuine involvement. There is wide variation between GP services and also their approaches to patient involvement. Someone asked "Would they be any more consistent after April 2013? Would there be information provided on entitlements to screening for certain health conditions, perhaps? Do patients know that they might be the subject of a health care plan?"

Over the summer Pensioner Action had conducted interviews and a paper survey among older patients from 37 of the 47 surgeries over the summer of 2012. We talked to the Neighbourhood Groups, visitors to our stand at Peoples' Day, responses from The Pensioner magazine and Neighbourhood Care Scheme newsletters. People found the 8.30am telephone bottleneck very difficult to manage when feeling ill. Only one fifth of respondents were aware of PPGs. Getting the desired messages across to patients, especially those without a computer, was shown to be a major challenge, as even patients from some surgeries with active PPGs were unaware of them.

The feedback we had from older people was varied, they said that:

- while they are some of the highest users of GP surgeries, they are often excluded by email-only consultations
- they know only too well the limitations of the powers of involvement groups, and do not wish to put their energies into this new variation of them

- they do not want to criticise an overstretched resource on which they may come to rely.

One event participant felt strongly that the improvements mentioned should already be within the responsibilities of a competent practice manager. Did it really need a patient group to deliver such basic things? This point was supported by many of the audience and received loud applause.

After comparing all these experiences, a retired civil servant commented that unless patient involvement was enforced from the top, it would be all good words and no actions. He said that patient groups would be given "pennies for their meetings, but participation and choice mean nothing if not backed up with consequent action". He said he had seen it during his working years; "you throw the glitter around, and they're so busy looking at it they miss what's really going on".

A lady concluded "this government has been very clever, making budget cuts while the rich get richer!"

Pensioner Action still urge older people to get involved in the Patient Participation Groups – ask penetrating questions, like "What are the target groups for this preventative health programme? How does that budget affect this other group of patients? What incentives are available to do that? What rights and responsibilities do patients have on that issue? How could the surgery use partner services like pharmacies to communicate with the patients? How does communication work within the surgery?". Help protect your NHS for the wider benefit of all!

Do you have a view? We at Pensioner Action would like to hear your opinions and will pass them on to the Primary Care Trust.

Pensioner Action public event Age-friendly community involvement – does it have any teeth?

10am – 1pm November 27th 2012
Friends' Meeting House, Ship St, Brighton

Retired people are active in all sorts of health-related and community forums throughout the city. Do these forums benefit older people in equal measure? Are they 'age-friendly'?

Come and find out more about all the different involvement avenues which inform health and wellbeing in the city, and what they are working on.

If you are already involved, do you feel you are taken seriously? Why is it important for you to continue? Soon it will be compulsory for GP surgeries to have a Patient Participation Group. What difference can it make?

Making a positive choice for yourself, and for the benefit of others. Get involved, and sharpen those teeth!



Neighbourhood Groups - are they for me?

Pensioner Action's Neighbourhood Groups used to be the 60+ Action Groups until we merged with the Pensioners' Forum. There is a mix of long-standing members and newer people who come along. In the past they were more like social groups, now they are friendly discussion groups on different themes of health and wellbeing.

In the last year we have covered a wide range of issues:

Keeping our minds and moods positive / seats at bus stops / oral health and our rights as dental patients / retailer scams to watch out for / the TV switchover / cancer prevention / free hand and back massages / unpaid older carers / GP appointment systems / cuts in homecare services / GP surgeries Patient Participation groups – how to get involved.

When there is an issue affecting several people, Pensioner Action gets in touch with the right body to make your views heard. Our groups meet in sheltered housing centres in the north, east, west and central areas of the city. This means that people who live in these schemes but can't get out very easily can still come to the meetings. We usually have a cup of tea to round things off and always welcome new people to our groups. You can just turn up or phone 01273 229 004 if you would like directions.

Pensioner Action Neighbourhood Group meeting dates 2012/13

Moulsecoomb Group - Meets on Tuesdays at The Orchards, Moulsecoomb Way, BN2 4QJ, 2.30 – 4.00pm on: Nov 6, 2012, Jan 29, 2013, March 5, 2013

Patching Lodge Group - Meets on Tuesdays at Patching Lodge (lounge area), Eastern Road, BN2 0NQ, 2.30 – 4.00pm on: Nov 13, 2012, Jan 15, 2013 March 12, 2013

West Hove Group - Meets on Tuesdays at Muriel House, Ingram Crescent West, Hove, BN3 5NS, 2.30 – 4.00pm on: Nov 20, 2012, Jan 22, 2013, March 19, 2013

Craven Vale Group - Meets on Wednesdays at Craven Vale Resource Centre, Craven Rd, BN2 0FE, 2.00 – 4.00pm on: Nov 28, 2012, Jan 31, 2013, Feb 27, 2013, March 27, 2013



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A GP's view

We, the growing number of pensioners, should not be made to feel guilty about our use of GP services.

The role of the GP has changed considerably since the start of the NHS in 1948. At that time a much larger proportion of GPs were single handed practitioners, often working at home, and mostly male. Wives frequently carried out secretarial and receptionist work and were usually unpaid. GPs were permanently on call unless they could join a rota manned by local colleagues. They dealt with most minor injuries. Home visits formed a large part of the day's work and with the help of a midwife attached to their practice a high percentage of babies were delivered at home. In larger practices, partners had their own list of patients who expected to be seen by their 'own' doctor. Appointment systems were very rare and patients waited in gloomy rooms until it was their turn to be seen. Then, as now, GPs directed patients to hospital services but consultants could be asked to visit patients in their homes.

These days the complaints most commonly heard from patients trying to access GP services relate to difficulties in making an appointment. Are there too few doctors and practice nurses, are they inefficient or is there simply too much demand? Although an independent contractor with the NHS, the GP's workload is heavily influenced by government priorities such as preventive care, leaving less time for other aspects of care. Until quite recently the GP was the first port of call for virtually all medical advice and you left the surgery with a prescription or a hospital referral letter. We are now encouraged, by waiting room posters, to share our problem with a pharmacist, go straight to A & E, or even to wait for the out of hours service. Pharmacists are also an excellent source of advice.

The best thing patients can do to keep well is to take more responsibility for their health by following well-known advice on keeping healthy, like eating less of the wrong things, and exercising more.

The NHS has, to its great credit, improved our collective standard of health so we can hardly be blamed for living longer! We do need to make efficient use of our busy GPs so let me offer some advice. Go to your appointment well prepared, write down your symptoms, take a list of your medicines and don't waste precious time talking about unrelated topics. Take a small urine sample and if you think it likely that you will need to be examined avoid clothing with fastenings that would have baffled Houdini!

Last week I was listening to one of the most senior members of my profession who said, quite clearly, that the supply of new drugs to cure our problems is drying up and no great improvements in diagnostic equipment are in sight either. Drug companies however, have little cause for concern because the current surge in obesity means that their huge incomes will flow in even more rapidly from the sales of drugs needed to decrease the risks associated with our bulging bellies. So unless we take better care of ourselves, the NHS as we now know it may not be able to cope.

By Duncan Stewart (retired GP).

You said, we did!

In this section we report on our actions arising from your feedback

Pensioner Action's public event report - spouse or carer – know your entitlements

This was the theme of a highly informative meeting held by Pensioner Action on the 24th of July 2012 at the Friends Meeting House.

It is commonly estimated that there are 4 million of us who are carers; of these a ¼ are over 60 years old – men and women looking after a highly dependant partner. One ¼ of carers are over 75 years old and give over 50 hours of support each week. The financial savings to the economy produced by carers is estimated to be nearly £120 billion!

The meeting opened with a graphic description of a carer's life. Bert Richards, now in his 90's, cares for his slightly younger wife who suffered a stroke some years ago and has difficulty in walking; she is incontinent and experiencing progressive dementia. Bert's day is full, but he is one of the fortunate ones', helped by younger carers who come to his home three times a day to help with the personal care of his wife. As a result Bert is still able to be an active volunteer with, for example the Stroke Association and the Air Training Corps (Bill was an RAF pilot in his youth).

The main speaker was Sheila Killick, Adult Carers team manager of the Carers Centre. After providing the statistics cited above, she explored the definition of 'carer' – most of us think we are managing; but we are nonetheless, carers.

The impact of caring is experienced financially, in our health and in our social life, it is difficult to avoid becoming isolated. Publicly funded benefits are available, but they can be a mine-field! Sheila outlined the help that the Carers' Centre can give in navigating a path through them. The centre also provides support and advice covering a wide range of issues, runs courses for carers and organises regular coffee mornings.

Sue Goodwin adds:

'An issue of concern to all present was the impact on unpaid family carers of budget limitations set by the council for the time given by the paid carers. We heard tales of a 45 minute visit cut down to 15 minutes, which is clearly inadequate to support people who need time to move around the home without falling. The number of older people needing paid carers has grown, but the budget has stayed the same. The council is trying to make the same money go further by rationing it out between more people for shorter periods of time. While participants were sympathetic to the paid carers for struggling to deliver meaningful support in this time-frame, they were reminded that they have a right to request a different care agency if they were not happy with the service provided, and it is important that people speak up!

We learnt that if an older person offers care for over 20 hours a week, they can get Carer's Credit to protect their state pension entitlement. AgeUK Advice and Information Service was on hand to provide extra information on particular queries, and new Carer Support Workers from the council were present to make contacts for their future work. Information on the new HealthWatch consultation and Information Prescriptions website were handed out with information sheets for carers.'

So – if you are a carer (and even if you think that you are managing) do contact the Carers' Centre: 18 Bedford Place, Brighton, BN1 2PT, tel: 01273 746 222 / email: info@thecarerscentre.org / website: www.thecarerscentre.org
You are sure to learn something of use!



Sue Howley, Chair of Pensioner Action, welcoming attendees to the spouse or care event.

Home care in Brighton & Hove - how are we doing?

The government's recent Care & Support White Paper has been strongly criticised for its failure to plan the funding of care or acknowledge the conflict between growing need and falling spending (Richard Humphries, July 2012, The Kings Fund, found at: <http://bit.ly/RIYQqK>).

At Impetus, our front-line experience enables us to work with statutory authorities to improve the lives of vulnerable adults. Pensioner Action works across Brighton & Hove to encourage older people's representation on health and wellbeing issues – in which the level of home care support is a regular concern. Its sister project; the 'Lay Assessors Scheme' provides an independent voice for people to tell the local authority what they think about the quality of their home care.

Brighton & Hove Council spends around £11 million a year on home care for people assessed as 'in need', and it has a duty to know whether it is getting value for money. It commissions the Lay Assessors Scheme to survey around 180 home care users each year in order to help monitor the quality of these services. In face-to-face interviews in their own homes, care users tell our trained, volunteer 'lay assessors' how satisfied they are with various aspects of their care; this information is analysed and reported to the council, who then notifies the service provider of the outcome.

The Lay Assessors Scheme recently undertook a study of its last 2 years' work, in order to see whether any generalisations or trends could be seen. The study analysed information from all surveys in the period May 2010 to April 2012. While it includes information from a minority of disabled adults under the age of 65, the great majority of interviewees were people over retirement age. The conclusions draw on what they told us their experiences were and how they felt about it. We are hoping to publish the findings, both in summary form in the next issue of The Pensioner, and on the Impetus website. The Older People's Council are also tackling this issue, so watch this space!

Jo Tulloch, Lay Assessors Scheme Project Leader

See the Pensioner Action 'Spouse or carer event report' for more information (left).

Getting ready for your mental health visit – what you can do to help

At our mental health event back in March you raised questions about how to get the best from the mental health professionals supporting older people, who are often short of time. You said you would like to discuss with them not just medication, but the changing abilities and behaviours of the person affected.

Via the Local Involvement Network (LINK) we asked the professionals how people could help, and what information people could provide, to get the best results? Here's what they said:

- when your mental health is to be assessed or reviewed, ask the health worker (often a Community Psychiatric Nurse) about what the content of the visit is to cover, so you are prepared
- provide a summary of life events (with examples)
- provide ideas of what would support you in the future (with examples)
- give them some medical history, as relevant

- show the health worker your medication, together with blister pack and details of which pharmacy you use
- bring family, a friend or a carer along who knows you well
- talk freely about your mental health and the processes involved – anyone can get ill, so let's help each other through it, you are helping by removing any stigma of having poor mental health
- get involved with feedback processes – there are service user consultation groups within MIND, and the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

If you are not happy with your mental health service, use the Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust's own Patient and Advice Liaison Service. Contact Nicky Murray on 01323 446 042.

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TEST your smoke alarm weekly

NEVER leave cooking unattended

Make sure your cigarettes are out before you go to bed

NEVER overload sockets
5+5+3=13 Amp limit per socket

For free advice on home safety contact 0800 177 7069.

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 Minicom: 01323 462002 Fax: 01323 462044
 Website: www.esfrs.org

Older people's health news

Online advice service re-launches

A new one-stop shop online advice service has been re-launched in Brighton & Hove.

NHS Brighton & Hove and Brighton & Hove City Council have updated the Information Prescriptions website at www.ipbh.org.uk and added more categories with information on both local and national health and social care services. The site also includes a wide range of advice, support and information that empowers local residents to improve their general wellbeing.

Information Prescriptions signposts people to organisations with information on a variety of topics including health conditions, social care needs, local support groups, help with finances as well as details of local crisis support services.

The project has successfully rolled out to 6 GP practices, 4 pharmacies and 3 libraries in its first phase, who have been trained to 'prescribe' information to their service users. The second phase aims to roll out to all GPs, libraries, community centres and advice providers making the project city wide by the end of 2012.



For more information contact Tanya Nayyar (01273) 574 653.

HealthLink is part of LifeLines, a volunteer-led project which aims to improve the lives of isolated and vulnerable older people by helping them access a range of activities and events that will benefit their health and wellbeing.

A note from Pensioner Action's service manager

Thank you to all those people who filled in our surveys on GP appointment systems and how your surgery's Patient Participation Groups could be used to change things. We are spreading the word and contributing to the local debate on the patient experience. We have fed back to the Primary Care Trust and linked with partner organisations to help these work more widely.

Pensioner Action have also got in touch with the relevant organisations about pedestrian crossings, seats at bus stops, environmental issues preventing people enjoying their homes in peace, mental health services feedback, oral health and helping our friends with symptoms of dementia. If an issue affects several people Pensioner Action will take it up on your behalf. Please call Sue Goodwin on 01273 229 385 or email: susan.goodwin@bh-impetus.org

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Paying for social care – one step forward?

The story goes on...

When it came to power in 1997, the Labour Government set up a commission which recommended the establishment of a national care service; this was established in Scotland but rejected for England and Wales. Then a decade of silence. But in its final three years, the government did publish first a discussion paper and then green and white papers which set out in great detail the issues involved. Within days of the white paper the election was called.

The incoming Coalition Government, under David Cameron, fairly quickly set up its own commission under Andrew Dilnot to continue the debate. He proposed that:

- the level below which we would become eligible for public funding (e.g. from Adult Social Care) should be raised from £23,500 to £100,000
- we should be liable to pay £30,000 towards the cost of residential care (allowing for about 2 years in a care home) public funding would be available thereafter

A year later in July 2012 (and just before Parliament's summer break) the Coalition Government published its own white paper, in which it accepted Dilnot's proposals in principle, but could not see its way to providing the money needed before the spending review of 2013. Government politicians hailed this as a great leap forward; opposition critics said the problem was 'being kicked into the long grass'. All parties agreed that ongoing discussions should seek all-party consensus. Labour politicians claim that they have not recently been invited to any such discussions.

All this seems to leave wide open the big issues about how we will ultimately pay for social care in our old age. Responses to the Labour Government's papers before 2012 suggested that a majority would welcome a national care service, paralleling the NHS which would be largely funded by taxes or compulsory national insurance. At the other end of the political spectrum are those who feel that such care is our own personal responsibility for which we should provide individual insurance policies; the state would step in only in the last resort. The attention of the politicians still seems to be focussed on those who have to sell their homes (thus depriving their children of their inheritance) to pay care home fees. But far older people pay heavily to bring care and support in to their own home.

Nobody is supporting the recreation of the Victorian workhouse. But while those of us whose ailments can be mitigated by medicines and surgery will continue to be well supported, those who need social care, following for example, a stroke or dementia, will not be so fortunate.

So where do we go now? We must keep the issue alive; it must not be kicked in to oblivion!

By Peter Lloyd



Care Homes – 'Enter and View' with LINK

Have you ever visited a care home and wondered about how they are inspected? The LINK organisation asks members of the community to volunteer to visit and scrutinise the quality of care, and are looking for active helpers with an interest in the subject to get involved.

These visits are commissioned by the council, and will look into at least 20 care homes in the vicinity of Brighton & Hove. Each 'Enter and View' representative will receive additional training about care homes from the council as a pre-requisite of taking part. They will also do an observation over a lunch time period to see how staff interact with residents.

The idea behind 'Enter and View' visits is that normal members of the community can make sure services are running to the standard they would expect, especially with regards to care and compassion. We are always looking for more representatives, and with care home work it's particularly appropriate that we have some older reps, as we find older people can make those in the homes we visit feel more at ease during interviews.

A standard 'Enter and View' visit entails authorised representatives who have been trained and Criminal Records Bureau checked on behalf of the LINK.

It's an interesting and varied role, you can:

- meet and talk to patients, carers and service users
- visit and learn more about health and social care premises e.g. GP practices, hospitals, care homes
- help to improve services

You will:

- help prepare for visits by reading surveys and checklists
- have an interest in health and social care
- be committed to achieving our aims and objectives
- be able to objectively observe and assess the nature and quality of services
- have a commitment to equal opportunities and valuing diversity
- attend any training or induction as deemed necessary
- be part of a team
- undertake at least two visits a year
- report findings back to the LINK

You can be as involved as you like. You can attend as many visits as you are able to. The minimum requirement is to take part in 2 visits per year (which last approximately 2.5 hours) but you will be expected to prepare for each visit and report back (approximately 4 hours for each visit). The staff support team will contact you with the details of visits and you can choose which ones you are able and interested in participating in.

If you are interested in becoming involved with 'Enter and View' please contact: Kerry Dowding, LINK Development Officer, Direct Line: 01273 810 236 or visit the website: www.bhlink.org

Sussex End of Life Care in Dementia Project

Introduction

End of life in dementia is recognised as being complex. 1 in 3 people will die with the condition, yet it can be difficult for practitioners to recognise nearness to death for an older person with dementia, because older people often experience a gradual long-term decline and communication difficulties. As a result there is commonly under-treatment of symptoms, such as pain, and the use of more aggressive interventions such as artificial feeding. Too many people die a painful, undignified death in hospital when their wishes would have been to be supported to die at home.

There are local transformation programmes across Sussex to improve the end of life care pathway and to improve the dementia care pathway. NHS Sussex has successfully secured Regional Innovation Funding (RIF) for one year to support Sussex in implementing a change in the model of care at the junction of these two pathways.

Project aims and objectives

The overall aim of the project is to improve end of life care for people with dementia across Sussex, so that more people with dementia die in their preferred place of death, with dignity, without undue pain and with their advance wishes respected.

The specific project objectives are:

- to increase advanced end of life care planning for people with dementia
- to develop a comprehensive care pathway for people with dementia at the end of life
- to ensure staff caring for those with dementia and nearing the end of their life are equipped with the skills to deliver safe, high quality care

To date multi-agency End of Life Care in Dementia groups are being established in each locality to share knowledge, and practice and work together to develop action plans to support joint working initiatives. The process of whole system engagement through these groups will be instrumental in developing the integrated End of Life Care in Dementia pathways across Sussex. Following this, each group will develop local implementation action plans, this will include how End of Life Care in Dementia learning and development needs across the health and social care sector, will be met.



This project represents an exciting opportunity for shaping services in Sussex and we have been successful in achieving good representation from the main stakeholders. In addition, carers organisations and those supporting people with dementia have been keen to be involved. I have been either meeting carers on a 1:1 basis or attending carers support groups to gather views and perceptions which can then be used to both inform the care pathway development, as well as learning and development opportunities. The stakeholder groups are operating in slightly different ways as they are being driven forward within each of the four areas across Sussex. This presents an opportunity to evaluate approaches which would hopefully inform future work involving stakeholder engagement.

'Pensioner Action' has already found some members to participate in this research on an ongoing basis. If you have first or second hand experience of dementia, you could be a useful 'expert' for this project. If you would like to know more or share your experiences, good and not so good, then please do contact me: Eleanor Langridge, Project Manager, email: eleanor.langridge@nhs.net / tel: 07734 247 959.

A free drop-in for people who live with dementia

'A Place to Relax' is the name of the early evening support group offered by the Alzheimer's Disease Society. It takes place on the third Wednesday of the month, from 6pm to 8pm at the Kemp Town Crypt Community Centre and Cafe, St George's Road, Brighton, BN2 1ED. All are welcome.

Activities & information in your city

New Larchwood facility

New Larchwood is an extra-care facility for older and disabled people in Coldean and has been running since 2006 when it was set up as a partnership between Hanover Housing Association, the Trust for Developing Communities and Adult Social Care.

Steve Andrews, Community Participation Worker, has worked for the Trust since that time and works supporting residents with initiating activities and groups of their own. So far, there has been a Reminiscence Group, a Community Allotment, an Art Group, Gentle Exercise and Well-Being Music Group - to name but a few. Many of these groups now attract people city-wide.

Steve feels it is crucial that the wider community are involved and that New Larchwood should be seen as the hub of the community rather than a building used solely by older people. Plans for a large intergenerational project next year will include looking at similarities between 'then' and 'now', bringing families together, and studying the strong tradition of industry in surrounding estates as well as rural occupations.

If you know anyone who would benefit from joining these activities, or if you would like to arrange a group visit, contact Steve Andrews on 01273 676 416 or email him at steveandrews@trustdevcom.org.uk
The Trust for Developing Communities website is www.trustdevcom.org.uk



Bellerby's College students entertain at New Larchwood on St Patrick's Day.

Interested in meeting and talking to other people with hearing loss?

- **Need to talk to a staff member about problems you are having?**
- **Fancy a drink or something to eat?**
- **Want to come to an informal and friendly environment?**
- **Want to volunteer?**

You have come to the right place – this is us...!

Come and join our hard of hearing group in Brighton. The group meets the 1st & 3rd Wednesday of the month 10.30am – 12.30pm.

Entry: 50p plus small charge for refreshments. The group is held at:

The Sussex Deaf Association,
Brighton Deaf Centre, Carlton Hill,
Brighton, BN2 0GW.

We are next to the Greek Orthodox Church or top of White Street.

Contact us:

Tel: 01273 671 899 /

Email: info@sussexdeaf.com

or see our website:

www.sussexdeaf.co.uk

You do not need to use sign language.

At home this morning - revised timings

'At home this morning' is a radio programme made for older people by older people. It lasts an hour and is broadcast on RadioReverb's community radio station on 97.2 FM. Since the last issue of The Pensioner the timings have been revised. The shows are now at the following times:

Tuesdays – 11.00am / Thursdays – 9.00am
/ Sundays – 8.00am

The programme changes every two weeks. If you miss a show and have a computer visit www.radioreverb.com and 'Click to listen online'.



Country bus rides

After years of poor bus services to rural parts of Sussex, Metrobus of Crawley have now introduced new hourly services on Mondays to Saturdays, providing new direct links to Lindfield, Horsted Keynes and East Grinstead. All services follow the direct road from Old Steine to Stone Pound, Hassocks, where the routes divide, the 270 and 271 continuing to Burgess Hill.

The No.270 normally starts from the Royal Sussex County Hospital at 15 minutes past, and Old Steine at 23 minutes past the hour, calling at Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath, Lindfield, Horsted Keynes, Forest Row and East Grinstead. The No. 271 and 273 start from Churchill Square at 48 minutes past the hour, (271 at even hours and 273 at odd hours), effectively providing an hourly service to Handcross (for Nymans National Trust gardens) and Crawley.

Holders of the Concessionary Travel pass are urged to use these services as it could be a case of 'use it or lose it'.

Article by Mick Kohn.

Older People's Council news



by Jack Hazelgrove, Chair of the OPC

We recently had a discussion about the housing situation at our public meeting in the Jubilee Library. There is an acute shortage of affordable and social housing and waiting lists run into many thousands. Older people must wonder how it was that after the world war when this country was far poorer than it is today, we still managed to build hundreds of thousands of new homes to meet the needs of the time.

Now many council homes have been sold off and are now run as letting businesses by private landlords and no new homes have been built for 30 years. I was glad to hear at our meeting that the Mayor, Cllr Bill Randall- himself a hugely experienced commentator on housing policy said that the council is planning new council house building - albeit on a small scale. Specialist housing for older people is also much needed. The age group between 80 and 100 is set to grow considerably in the future, thanks to better health and living conditions, but this brings with it the need for greater expenditure on home adaptations and living aids as well as extra care sheltered housing and planned retirement homes.

There is little evidence that the government is facing up to this need for long term planning, and in the

present economic climate there seems little prospect of substantial investment. However, locally there are some positive developments. It is good to see the Open Market being rebuilt to provide accommodation as well as market stalls, and there are interesting innovative plans for the redevelopment of the old Preston Barracks.

Finally, the Older People's Council's next open public meeting will be in the Jubilee Library at 10.30am on January 22nd, 2013. You can contact us by phone on 01273 296 427 (answerphone) or write to us at: OPC Room 128, Kings House, Grand Avenue, Hove, BN3 2LS.

www.olderpeoplescouncil.org / tel: 01273 296 427 / email: olderpeoplescouncil@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Golden Oldies exercise class

If you would like to be part of a gentle and friendly exercise class for the over 50's then this may well be for you. It is held in Moulsecomb Hall on the Lewes Road each Wednesday from 10am to 11.30am. A group of people get together with an instructor for some gentle exercises to music. People are then welcome to stay for tea and a chat. On occasion, the group go on outings to a carvery for a good roast lunch. The first session is free then just £2 thereafter. Please come along and have a very pleasant morning out. **For further information please contact Mrs Herring on 01273 607 060.**

Your Local Mobility Experts...

Clearwell Mobility is the leading supplier of mobility and homecare equipment in Sussex with showrooms throughout the area.

Our focus is to ensure that you choose the best product to suit your needs. Our staff are trained as Trusted Assessors and do not employ pressure sales tactics - just helpful, friendly advice.

As well as showrooms to visit, we have a **free** home assessment service where we bring products for you to try at home. You can also order products for home delivery either by calling your local showroom or going to our website.

BRIGHTON SHOWROOM

110 Warren Road
Woodingdean
Brighton BN1 1BA

01273 692244

9am-5pm Mon-Sat

HOVE SHOWROOM

61 Boundary Road
Hove BN3 5TD

01273 424224

9am-5pm Mon-Sat

Clearwell
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www.clearwellmobility.co.uk



...Making Life Easier

'Peg' - The Sussex Caring Pet

Peg is one and a half years old, very scruffy, small and black with a ginger moustache. She's a Schnoodle, one of the ubiquitous hypoallergenic poodle crosses. 'She's a comical sort of dog,' says her owner, TV and film actor, Paul Bazely, most well known for his role as 'Troy' in ITV's hit comedy BENIDORM, 'and she's been a huge hit with my two children. She's very loving and she makes us laugh all of the time. She doesn't bark, she talks to us!'

So she's a much loved family pet but now her role extends beyond the family. "She loves people especially children, and twice a month she wears what I call her 'vest of honour' in her role as a Sussex Caring Pet (SCP) therapy dog."

Paul was approached at a local summer fete and dog show to be a celebrity volunteer member for the charity and he jumped at the chance. Peg was 'auditioned' at the age of nine months to become a therapy dog - to check whether she had a suitable temperament; she passed with flying colours.

Paul and SCP therapy dog Peg have since become regular visitors to the Cedar Centre School for children with special needs in Hollingdean and the Princess Alexandra House Care Home for older people. "I get an awful lot out of it and Peg loves all the attention" says Paul. "The senior citizens enjoy petting Peg - dogs are of course, naturally therapeutic and Peg's gentleness and responsiveness seems to relax and unlock them in some way. The elderly residents reminisce about the past in a way which I find fascinating. Peg's presence means we have an instant topic of conversation, an instant bond - she facilitates the connection between us and the talk just flows. She's also rather partial to the biscuits they reward her with!"

The trips to the Cedar Centre Special School are much more energetic. "The children are lively, full of questions about Peg and also what it's like to be a TV actor. Peg gets a lot of exercise on those days with the children! A lot of the young adults have problems with concentration, but Peg brings out gentleness in them, a caring side to their nature which is very touching to see." Paul has found his work for the charity immensely rewarding: "I can see that the SCP therapy dogs really seem to show a special sensitivity towards vulnerable children and adults."

These caring therapy dogs also do visits to local hospitals and hospices and their arrival is always greeted with laughter from the staff as well as the patients. "Peg is very stimulated by her visits and she always sleeps well on her 'working' days! I like that the charity is locally based and helps to forge links with the local community. It has brought me closer to Peg and made me appreciate



Paul Bazely and Sussex Caring Pet therapy dog 'Peg' visiting a resident at Alexandra House Care Home.

what a gift owning a pet can be - a gift which can easily be shared. As someone in the public eye it's also rather good for me to see that on these occasions my dog gets more attention than I do!"

About Sussex Caring Pets

Sussex Caring Pets believes that animal assisted therapy provides a source of companionship, comfort and stimulation that is unique and also underpins the work done by the professionals. Our teams of volunteers regularly visit residential care homes, special/mainstream schools, hospitals and hospices.

To be suitable your dog or cat must be people-oriented - not excitable and not nervous as they may come across unexpected noises and unusual behaviour during their visit. If after a series of simple tasks we agree that the pet is suitable, then we discuss with the volunteer what kind of place they would like to visit and what might best suit their animal. Once approved, visits are usually conducted weekly or fortnightly depending on the volunteer's availability and the needs of the place to be visited.

To find out how to volunteer, or see how to support us in other ways, please visit our website: www.sussexcaringpets.org or email us at info@sussexcaringpets.org or call us on 0779 646 8291.

To receive an application form, please send a S.A.E. to: SCP, 80 Oaklands Avenue, Saltdean, Brighton BN2 8PA or see our website: <http://www.sussexcaringpets.org/>



Cold caller caution!

One of the Neighbourhood Care Scheme members has got in touch with us as she has been contacted by phone by a home security company asking if her home is secure and whether she would like to be a demonstration home for their products. They have phoned her several times. Suspicious, she phoned the council and they advised her to not go ahead with this. The project manager for the Neighbourhood Care Scheme, Sean De Depodesta, spoke with her and suggested the following:

- let the police know in a non-emergency way
- if they call again tell them she has discussed the matter with her family and friends and they have advised her not to go ahead, then put the phone down
- get on to the Telephone Preference Service

We are very suspicious of cold telephone marketing of security systems. Please take this as a warning. To opt out of receiving unsolicited sales and marketing calls

you can contact the Telephone Preference Service and join their official central opt out register, on which you can record your preference not to receive cold calls. It is a legal requirement that all organisations (including charities, voluntary organisations and political parties) do not make such calls to numbers registered on the Telephone Preference Service unless they have your consent to do so.

To register to opt out go to the TPS website at http://www.tpsonline.org.uk/tps/number_type.html - or call the Telephone Preference Service on 0845 070 0707.



In remembrance of Jacqueline Meacock

We were sorry to hear of the death of Pensioner Action member Mrs Jacqueline Meacock (pictured below), who chose to use the Dignitas service to end her life on the 13th September 2012. Mrs Meacock had regularly attended our Patching Lodge Neighbourhood Groups and had been active in campaigning for peoples' right to end their own lives. Pensioner Action send our deepest sympathy to her friends and family at this difficult time.



Could you do with help and company at home?

Or know someone who could?

We can help with **shopping • meals**

- **cleaning • laundry • hobbies • pets**
- **appointments & activities • hairdressing**
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- **benefits advice • home security • building**
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Call 01273 434190
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Need extra help at home?



Care Outlook are a local Home Care Provider offering care and support to people in their own homes in your area.

Our caring, reliable and trustworthy staff will provide you with sensitive care and support in your own home, tailored to your individual needs, to enable you to live as independently as possible.

At Care Outlook we understand that some of the daily tasks many people take for granted can become challenging or restrictive. We are here to help you remain independent at home and continue to enjoy life to its fullest, without worrying about the things that are very personal to you.

All our staff are CRB/police checked and fully trained.

Care Outlook is registered with the Care Quality Commission.

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- Flexible Service
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- 24 hour Support Available
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For a **FREE** no obligation home assessment

please call: 01273 413 511

or you can email us at: brighton@careoutlook.co.uk

www.careoutlook.co.uk



Readers' contributions

Send your suggested contributions to Mandi Sherratt, Editor, contact details on page 2

Quiet Voice (for Dad)

Now, quiet voice says, "I am free"	pure white
Gentle vibration from light	Now, quiet voice says, "I am free"
beyond light	
Here, as you call quietly to me.	No more pain, no grief, eternal
	purity
I know the lady beside you, I see	Love never dies and knows no
Her looking at me with spiritual	day or night
sight	Here, as you call quietly to me.
Now, quiet voice says, "I am free"	
	Gentle man, with Mum safe in
No fear, end of loneliness, tall as a	eternity
tree	In my heart you dwell in special
Reaching upward, end of all	light
fright	Now, quiet voice says "I am
Here, as you call quietly to me.	free"
	Here as you call quietly to me.
Mum, Dad forever with me	
Never far, a thought away, from	<i>Poem by George Coombs</i>



And So to Bed

My electric blanket has arrived at last
I hope all my problems are a thing of
the past
It is a little higher than I originally
thought
Perhaps I'll need to get a jump start

The moment of truth has at last arrived
Time for bed, now I've got to decide
Shall I try the Fosberry Flop?
Or is that going a bit over the top?

At last I've made it on to the bed
With a fair bit of difficulty it must be said
From a recumbent posture I located
the control
The problem is getting it out from its hole

For a right-handed person with a left-
handed control
It's the very devil getting it back in its hole
I think I'll manage, I hope I am right
I'll find out for certain after tonight

A still small voice came into my head
It said "Wake up, time to get out of bed"
Drat, I was having such an interesting
dream
It involved golden sands, Frank Sinatra
and lots of ice cream

Time for my exercises, one two three,
one two three

Good, that's my eyes open, now I
can see
Perhaps now the remote will come
into sight
I can't remember where I parked it last
night

Now I can see it, I'd let it just dangle
I wonder how it got that particular
angle
Perhaps that will explain how my eyes
and my nose
Were on the same level as my knees
and my toes

How I got to my feet, well, that's
another story
At last now I am quite ambulatory
I must get myself all coiffured and
curled
And ready to greet the outside world

But when I look in the mirror, who do
I see?
Is it my mother's image looking at me?
No, the face is a bit like the one on TV
Is it the extra-terrestrial, the one
known as E.T?

Well, perhaps an observation like that
was a bit strong
I hope you'll agree that conclusion
was wrong
So back to the subject of the bed once
more

I've a few more thoughts on that
particular score

I really do not want to complain
It's getting on and off the bed that
causes most pain
If I can just find an easier way to get
my right leg over
That's when I reckon I'll be in clover

When I limp into my living room, what
do I see there?
It's a welcoming sight, my electric
armchair
I sit with my remotes, for my chair, TV,
DVD, CD and cable
Not forgetting my circulation booster
remote on my little side table

I freely admit now that I am pretty old
I realise now I am battery controlled
If I am quiet and still and you wonder
what's the matter with me
Don't be alarmed, I may just need a
new battery.

*Poem by Winifred Pilkington – Lifelines
Reading Group*



FABRICA

Fabrica is a visual arts organisation, based in a Grade 2-listed former Regency church in the heart of Brighton.

Fabrica offers a great programme of events for everyone and is committed to working with wider audiences, including older audiences.

Exhibitions are free and workshops are either free or low-cost. The building is fully accessible with disabled WC's.



ART - Fabrica has three exhibitions a year, each accompanied with a full programme of events.

MAKE - A wide variety of events and workshops are held throughout the year. Come and try something new, develop your skills or get involved in a discussion. Fabrica has something for everyone.

CHAT - Staff, volunteers and artists are committed to providing all our visitors with a warm and friendly welcome. Take friends and make new ones at Fabrica.

For more information on what Fabrica offer for older visitors and community/social groups contact Clare Hankinson, on 01273 778646 or email clare.hankinson@fabrica.org.uk.

FABRICA

40 Duke Street, Brighton,
East Sussex BN1 1AG

Telephone: 01273 778 646

Email: office@fabrica.org.uk



fabrica.org.uk