

The Pensioner

Journal of Brighton & Hove Pensioner Action

pensioner
action

empowering
older people

No. 45, Summer 2013

Pensioner Action closes – other doors open!

We reported in the “Stop Press” addition to our last issue that, sadly, Pensioner Action closes on 30 June 2013. It has been funded over the last few years by the Primary Care Trust (now the Clinical Commissioning Group) but that support ends following a necessary re-focussing of the CCG’s funding priorities.

Pensioner Action only came into being in February 2011, but over its short life has achieved a great deal. (See “A decade of achievement” on page 2 for its history and achievements.)

We celebrated these achievements at People’s Day on 15 June (see the article on page 4) and realised how much we had to be proud of. We were not dispirited - after all, we are lucky to live in a City where there is so much going on for older people and where new opportunities for them to be involved crop up all the time. Also, we have high hopes that much that we have been doing will be carried on by others:

- Age UK Brighton & Hove are hoping to produce *The Pensioner* and to re-launch it under their auspices in the near future. Discussions are still ongoing at the time of going to press and further announcements are likely as discussions progress. Part of the process to keep a publication like *The Pensioner* will be to evaluate what impact it has - and could have. Hence the questionnaire on the middle four pages of this issue, which we very much hope you will complete. We have also been exploring these questions with our Neighbourhood Groups and some of their comments are included throughout this issue. They are gratifying, but we do not want you to be too influenced by them – we have held back on the ones that are not so complimentary! We want to know what you really think! So please do complete the questionnaire on the centre pages and post it back to us, using the FREEPOST facility if you wish.
- If you have attended the Neighbourhood Groups, you will probably already be aware of the progress finding people and organisations to provide support and ongoing involvement for group members.
- For those of you who are active in our Age Friendly City Focus Group, it is good news that Age UK Brighton & Hove will be running this from now on – see the exciting item on page 5.

We’d like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who has helped us over the years - please see the back page note for our heartfelt thank you’s.



Inside this issue



People’s Day report



Age UK Brighton & Hove update



Older People’s Council news

No. 45

Apologies, thanks – and a request

We decided that we could produce one more issue of *The Pensioner*. But it is only two months since the previous issue; it has been difficult, with reduced resources, to achieve our expected standards. So we offer our apologies for all shortcomings. We have not been able, for instance, to gather examples of activities organised by older people; nor have we been able to include our usual number of advertisements. However, we have been able to give an up-date on a number of issues recently raised in these pages.

We offer our heartfelt thanks to all those who have “stepped into the breach” and enabled us to create this issue.

Finally, a request: do please complete the questionnaire and post it to us; we will be striving to re-launch *The Pensioner* – but we want to know what you want to receive and read.

Peter Lloyd
Chair, Editorial Committee

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A decade of achievement

A personal view of the history of Pensioner Action and its predecessors from Peter Lloyd

We live in an ageing society – every day the media reminds us. As a result, most towns and cities have scores of organisations dealing with older people’s issues – their social activities, their support, their protests. What is often advocated is an overarching organisation – an older people’s forum, which brings them together. Brighton & Hove have had such for many years (at least 20 perhaps – earlier records seem to have been lost); but it seems that Age Concern, led by Dorothy Engmann, was instrumental in creating a forum.

In 2003, the Brighton & Hove Coalition of Older People and the Brighton & Hove District Pensioners’ Forum came together; the short title of the new organisation would be The Pensioners’ Forum. *The Pensioner* magazine, which had not been published for a year, was re-launched thanks to a grant from the City Council.

The goals of the new Forum, as set out in *The Pensioner* of Summer 2004, were (summarised) to be an organisation run by older people for older people: to campaign, to provide information on activities, to confront age discrimination, to create opportunities for older people to become engaged, to ensure that service providers listen to older people and to monitor the work of the Older People’s Council. These objectives have been maintained, albeit in different wording, throughout the decade.

At this point the Pensioners’ Forum was located within and hosted by Age Concern Brighton Hove and Portslade; later they moved to Brighton & Hove Community Initiatives (which later became Impetus). The original funding from the City Council was replaced by a grant from the Primary Care Trust. When this became due for renewal in mid-2010, the

new grant was awarded to Impetus to embrace both the Pensioners’ Forum and the 60+ Action Groups. Pensioner Action was launched in February 2011, with a management committee, advisory to Impetus, which then contained representatives of both organisations.

The achievements of the Pensioners’ Forum/Pensioner Action during the past decade have been limited by their funding. The Forum employed but one administrator and Pensioner Action, for most of its life, only two – both part-time.

The Pensioners’ Forum: Its efforts were largely devoted to the running (latterly in November) of an Older People’s Day held in Hove Town Hall. This was a most ambitious event. The main lower hall was occupied by over 50 stalls provided by both public and voluntary organisations, advertising their services for older people. Upstairs was a programme of musical events and other activities. The Forum’s AGM was held. Being so conveniently located hundreds of older people (and others too) visited during the day.

The Forum was assisted in these efforts by Paul Martin, a Council staff member responsible for facilitating older people’s activities. But when he transferred to other duties, the Forum team found itself unable to meet the organisation demanded. And so the Older People’s Day ceased to exist, but later became incorporated within the City Council’s People’s Day (for all ages).

Continued on next page



A decade of achievement (continued from p2)

Pensioner Action: In its new guise, Pensioner Action developed a new mode of activity. Three or four times a year it organised a half-day public event, each with a theme that embraced a number of service providers who normally did not interact with each other. At these events a range of speakers described their work and services and also set up a stall with information. Events attracted from 20 – 40 participants who engaged in discussion with speakers. The event was subsequently written up in *The Pensioner* magazine. Topics of these events included:- The City Council's Budgets, The Age Friendly City, Patient Participation Groups, Networking for Health, Fuel Poverty, Heat or Eat.

The 60+ Action Groups, later re-named Neighbourhood Groups, continued to function within Pensioner Action and their activities have been regularly reported in *The Pensioner*. Latterly, they have been run in four areas: Moulsecomb, Craven Vale, Patching Lodge and West Hove, held within sheltered housing schemes and attended by residents, some with limited mobility who are unable to reach other venues very easily, and some outside visitors. Many participants have formed social support networks from attending these groups for over 20 years.

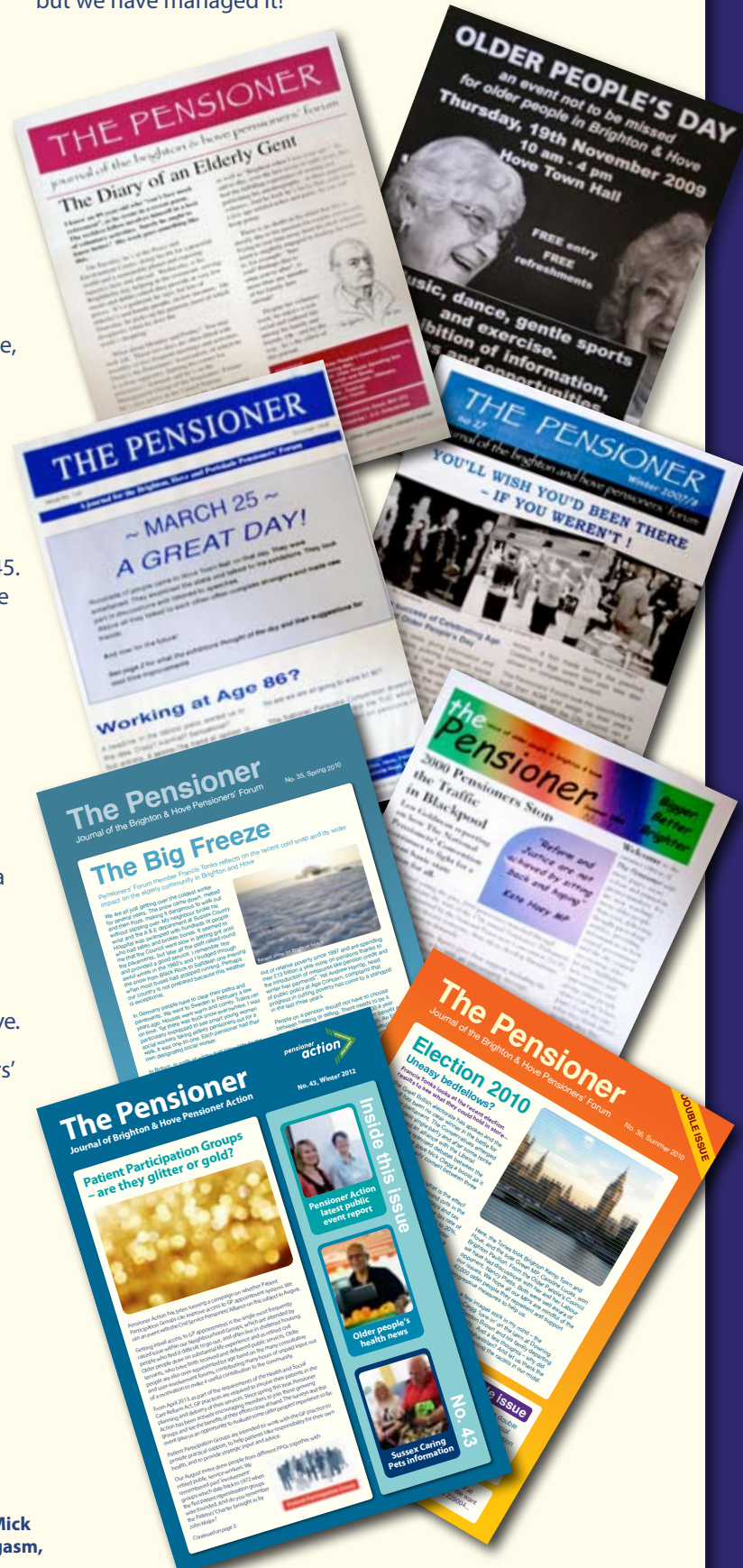
The Pensioner Magazine: The magazine was re-launched in Summer 2003; Winter 2004 was No. 15. This issue is No.45. (If any reader has a copy of the earlier issues we would love to see them.) Thus the magazine has been a consistent aspect of the Pensioners' Forum/Pensioner Action. Over the decade it has greatly improved in size and style; it is perhaps unique in Britain.

The issues at the beginning of the decade were edited by Barbara Wiseman (aged over 90 years) with Age Concern. Later Len Goldman (another 90+ year-old) took over. Our Administrators – Paula McEnaney, Lila Hunnisett and Mandi Sherratt – then became Editors whilst Peter Lloyd (a “youngster” in his 80's) took over as Chair of the Editorial Committee. The magazine grew from 4 to 8 to 12 pages, and then to 16 pages three times per year. We have squeezed much more into these pages and Paula and Lila used their professional skills to make issues much more visually attractive.

The magazine has promoted all the goals of the Pensioners' Forum/Pensioner Action set out by the former in 2003. It has publicised the activities of these organisations – and also other organisations run by older people; it has discussed issues of national and local government policy,

not only providing information but also commenting upon policies and services. We have illustrated organisations set up by older people themselves to create activities and services.

Throughout the decade, *The Pensioner* magazine has never been specifically funded; we have managed to cover our costs through our grants from the City Council and the PCT – together with a few advertisements. It has been a struggle – but we have managed it!



Members of the Pensioners' Forum in 2008, left to right: Les Terry, Mick Lister, Joan Moorhouse, Doug Stiller, Sheila Schaffer, Sathi Sivapragasm, Jack Dixon, Len Goldman, Francis Tonks, Peter Lloyd, Harry Steer.

Celebrations at People's Day

It was 15th June and New Road and Jubilee Street were packed with stalls, many relevant to older people. This was Brighton & Hove City Council's annual People's Day and, for the first time, a variety of events and activities for older people were located indoors at the Brighthelm Centre in a "Celebrating Age Zone", organised by Lifelines, Age UK Brighton & Hove and also Pensioner Action. The celebratory theme was just right for Pensioner Action's "farewell" session, which started the day's proceedings and which stressed its 22-year history, its achievements, and the many reasons to be cheerful about the future, despite its closure. Other activities and opportunities to be involved were illustrated by the stalls in the auditorium and the many events planned for the rest of the day.

At the next session, feedback was invited on *The Pensioner* – it was gratifying to hear enthusiasm for it, a belief in its potential for even greater things, a wish to keep it going and the desire of Age UK Brighton & Hove to house it. This was followed by a discussion of the Age Friendly City and then of the Neighbourhood Care Scheme. During the rest of the day, people enjoyed a wide variety of activities - drama, dancing, singing, music, films, massage and meditation sessions and much more. All in all, it was a great way to celebrate the achievements of Pensioner Action and some of the many opportunities for older people in the City!



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**"The Pensioner makes me feel that there are people out there to help you – it's comforting."
(Member of the Craven Vale Neighbourhood Group)**

**"It's important it's in colour – it cheers us up on dull, dark days."
(Member of the Patching Lodge Neighbourhood Group on The Pensioner)**



Older People's Council News

By way of an introduction, my photo shows me having completed the May 2013 London to Brighton 100km walk in less than 26 hours – and no blisters! Showing in my 63rd year that I practise what I have preached about active ageing for the past years as secretary of the Older People's Council; and that age doesn't have to be a barrier to an active old age. There are many amazing examples of older people still able to perform activities such as marathons, gymnastics and swimming they used to do in their 20s simply because they never stopped. Just start slowly – and keep on going...join with a friend...it can be fun and it works!!

This leads neatly into the April Health and Social Care changes, and as you have been made aware in recent issues, the new Clinical Commissioning Group now holds responsibility for budgeting and setting local priorities. Now the budget is administered locally, the CCG are expected to work with local Social Services to give a 'joined up' service for health and social care.

I was a panel member at a South East England Forum on Ageing symposium at Westminster in May where many concerns were voiced about how the CCG and Adult Social Care services will work together. Some areas requiring urgent progress were identified as poor home care, availability of extra care homes, failures in integrated care and poor communications. Care of older people too often was about crisis intervention rather than properly managed and staged care. Interestingly, the Shadow Health Minister spoke of the changes as fragmenting the health service and that they would be reversed if the Government changes.

Did you know that the January Health Ombudsman Review reported that complaints about poor communication, not listening and poor explanations had risen by 50% in a year? A King's Fund survey of England's Adult Social Care Directors, also in January, found nearly half the respondents thought that commissioned care had got worse in the last 12 months.



This does not sound good, but as a group we have to take some responsibility for directing our own health and care services. We should not accept poor health care but monitor and keep on voicing concerns so as to guide change towards the steady improvement of health and care services for the elderly.

Another big change coming is the WHO Age Friendly City initiative the Council has now subscribed to. We have been accepted into the international network but now the work begins. We need to document the good and bad aspects of our city lives, then to suggest improvements that can be easily implemented over the coming years. If you want to take an active part in this, see the item from Age UK below and the contact details there.

I'm told this is the final issue of *The Pensioner* so this may be my first and last contribution, but I have faith that it will continue in some form. There are many ways we can all communicate and work together, and you will hear from me again soon.

Mike Bojczuk, Secretary, Older People's Council Brighton & Hove

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

Is Brighton & Hove an Age-Friendly City? Opportunity!

In partnership with other organisations working with older people in the City, Brighton & Hove City Council are trying to make Brighton & Hove a better place for older people to live in. Following a proposal from the Older People's Council (as previously reported in *The Pensioner*), they have started the process to apply for Brighton & Hove to become an "Age Friendly City". This process allows the local authority to work with residents of Brighton & Hove, voluntary sector organisations and local businesses to look at what makes a city better for older people.

What can you do? Join in with the work by having your say and helping to show what is good about this city and what we need to work on over the next five years to improve it.

How can you be involved? To join the Age Friendly City Focus Group, contact Emily Ballantyne at Age UK Brighton & Hove on 01273 720 603 or by email: emilyb@ageuk-bh.org.uk



Reviewing sheltered housing

Peter Huntbach, Older Peoples Housing Manager, Brighton & Hove City Council

We are all growing older and luckily, we are living longer. In our city we're no exception and in the years to come we're expecting an increase in the very old (those over 80) and those approaching older age (those in their 50s).

As the largest sheltered housing provider in Brighton & Hove, this provides us with both opportunities and challenges. We are therefore reviewing how we work to make sure we can continue to provide a valuable local service.

We believe that we can make a real difference to people's lives, supporting those who need a little more help and taking preventative steps to ensure that people live a more active and healthy old age. We know that many of the health impacts in the city, from cancer to poor mental health could be prevented if better advice and support is provided earlier on.

If we get it right, we hope that our sheltered service can not only improve the quality of life for older people, maintaining their independence and wellbeing, but also reduce the need for hospital admission or residential care. Also, at a time when public budgets are under pressure, we believe that preventative services such as ours could help save money by reducing the need for more expensive health and social care interventions.

Recent changes in how health, public health and social care are organised mean that councils now have an important role in how all these services work together. We want to take advantage of this opportunity.

In our review, we want to see how we can work better with the health services, public health and Adult Social Care to support our aims.

When talking about health we don't always think about the impact of loneliness and isolation. Yet it's becoming evident that loneliness can have a devastating impact on an older person's wellbeing. The value of social relationships was recently brought home to me by the University of Brighton and Brighton & Hove Age UK's research into wellbeing in old age.

It is one of the enduring qualities of sheltered housing that our schemes provide a close community where older people can thrive. I'm constantly surprised about the activities in our

schemes and recently attended a fantastic lunch club run by residents for residents. Not only was the food of the highest quality but the sense of community spirit was overwhelming. We would like to see more activities such as this that tackle loneliness and isolation. In some of our sheltered schemes, activities are open to older people living nearby, and we'll want to make better use of the Fed's 'It's Local, Actually' scheme to promote these.

Of course there are challenges for us. As we all grow older some of us might need a greater level of support, particularly when we are very old. With over a third of our sheltered housing residents over 80 we need to make sure that our services are able to support a very old age group. That's not to say that everyone over 80 is frail, and many lead active and fulfilling lives, but we do need to be aware that our services are better tailored to meet the different needs and aspirations of all our residents.

We are very lucky to have an active group of sheltered residents (our Sheltered Housing Action Group) who are helping us with our review. We want to make sure that any changes we make to our sheltered service reflect the needs and aspirations of our residents.

If you would like to know more about the council's sheltered housing service or our review, please contact our sheltered housing team on tel: 01273 293 255 or email: sheltered@brighton-hove.gov.uk



"The Pensioner makes me feel we still belong to this world."

"We wouldn't get to know anything useful without *The Pensioner*!"

"We sometimes pick an item in *The Pensioner* and use it as a subject for discussion in the afternoons when we meet. It's so much better than 'what I had for tea!'"

(Members from the West Hove Neighbourhood Group)

"We would not have known about the Patient Participation Groups unless we had discussed it in our Group and read about it in *The Pensioner*."

(Member from the Craven Vale Neighbourhood Group)



Questionnaire

Pensioner Action would be most grateful if you would complete and return this freepost questionnaire. Please tick the answers that apply to you. Postage instructions are on p10.



Section A: About you

1. How old are you?

- Under 60 years 60-69 years 70-79 years Over 80 years

2. Do you live in...

- Sheltered housing or care home Alone With partner or family Other

3. Do you consider yourself...

- Fairly active Less active

4. Which of the following describes how you think of yourself?

- Female Male In some other way Prefer not to say

Section B. Reading *The Pensioner*

5. How do you get *The Pensioner*?

- Delivered to home Pick it up in a shop etc Receive electronically
- Read it in a lounge/waiting room Distributed at a meeting Other

6. Do you read... Most of it A few articles None of it

7. If this is your own copy, do you keep it...

- For up to two weeks More than 2 weeks Not applicable

8. If this is your own copy, how many other people read it?

- No-one 1-5 Over 6 Not applicable

Section C. Your opinion of *The Pensioner*

9. Do you enjoy receiving it?

Definitely yes Perhaps Not Interested

10. Is such a magazine for older people a good idea?

Yes Perhaps No

11. Does it contain information that you could not easily find elsewhere?

Yes Some None

12. Is it easy to read?

Layout	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Print size	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Style of writing	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Any comments: _____

Section D. What items do you like least/most (tick all that apply)

13.	Least interested	Most interested
News of older people's organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service/activities available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discussion of national/local policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helping to keep active	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Readers' letters/anecdotes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please give example/s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section E. In your own words

14. In what ways, if any, does *The Pensioner* benefit you?

15. As a result of *The Pensioner*, do you feel more confident about the problems of advanced age?

16. Do you want *The Pensioner* (or a similar magazine) to continue?

Definitely Yes Perhaps No

Section F. Finally: keeping in touch

17. Please tick if the following statements apply to you:

- a. I wish to be informed about future developments relating to older people's issues in the city
- b. I am interested in helping with a future magazine

If you have ticked one or both of these boxes, please provide contact details (please note that these details may be passed to Age UK Brighton & Hove):

Name: _____ Tel: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire; please turn over to find posting instructions.

Instructions

1. Carefully detach the questionnaire from the rest of the magazine
2. Fold lower part backwards along the dotted line.
3. Fold the top part backwards and insert into the lower part.
4. Press firmly; add a little sticky tape or glue if necessary.
5. If the questionnaire has become damaged, put into an envelope and address as below.
6. You do not need a stamp; but adding a second class stamp will save Pensioner Action money.
7. Please post before the 17th August 2013.

**Pensioner Action, c/o Impetus,
Freepost RLYL-JR XR-EUYA
First Floor, Intergen House
65-67 Western Road
Hove
BN3 2JQ**

Patient Participation Groups and progress

Brighton & Hove Clinical Commissioning Group is supporting GP practices in the city to develop Patient Participation Groups (PPG's), to be one way of involving local users of NHS services in the changes, developments and improvements in local health services.

As readers of the Pensioner will remember, the CCG expects all of the 47 GP practices in Brighton & Hove to develop a way of bringing the views of patients to not only effect change in their GP practice but also in wider area and city-wide health issues.

It has become clear that there are variations in how PPG's are developing throughout the city. Some GP practices have well developed PPG's who are looking at health and wellbeing issues in their area and supporting the practice to promote health and wellbeing.

Case study – Woodingdean

The PPG at Woodingdean Surgery is a thriving and well developed partnership between patients and the practice. PPG members have recruited many on the patient list to the PPG. The PPG recently had a presentation from Public Health about the health priorities of Woodingdean, which the PPG have discussed in conjunction with the Practice. The PPG have recently been involved in a local health event, where they had a PPG stall and worked with other contributors.

One of the problems faced by CCG's is that of diversifying membership; typically, it has proved difficult to reach young people, ethnic minorities, people with learning disabilities to mention but a few. PPG's have also found reaching local communities challenging.

The CCG has supported GP practices in some areas to join PPG's together and to link with existing community activities.

Case study - Moulsecoomb and Bevendean

There are two main GP practices covering the Moulsecoomb and Bevendean areas. The local Community Development workers have been working with both practices to encourage joint working and liaison with local community groups.

Early gains have included:

- Local newsletters delivered to both practices
- Information about local Councillors available in practices, and their role highlighted to GP's
- PPG members visiting local community groups
- Information about local community activities available in GP practices.

It is clear that this will take some time to develop to its full potential, however, it is encouraging to see that the PPG's are starting to link with community work, which will eventually help to bring the views of a wider patient base to the PPG's and the GP practices, and influence area wide health priorities.

Some practices continue to struggle with PPG development, and the CCG is ensuring they are offered appropriate support.

We are always happy for patients to feed back to the CCG if they are experiencing particular problems in joining the PPG at their surgery - please contact Jane Lodge, Patient & Public Engagement Manager - email: jane.lodge1@nhs.net tel: 01273 574 649.

Putting the patient first

Earlier this year the media focussed on the failings of the Mid-Staffordshire NHS – its death rate seemed excessively high. The subsequent Francis Report highlighted poor patient care – and made 290 recommendations. Many of these are relevant not only to hospitals but also to primary care – doctors and nurses in their GP practices.

Our local Brighton & Hove Clinical Commissioning Group had a meeting on 14 May in The Brighthelm Centre to outline its response. Soline Jerram, Director of Quality and Primary Care, outlined the Francis Report. Participants, some 50 in all, sitting around six tables were asked to consider one of three questions:

- How can we help GP's understand the patient experience.
- What support needs to exist to enable patients to share their experiences.
- What concerns you when you use the NHS.

Our comments and conclusions, fed back to the organisers, frequently cited the role of Patient Participation Groups (see articles in *The Pensioner* and above).



It is gratifying to see the CCG engaging in such public consultation and one hopes that such events will be repeated. However, there seem to be an increasing number of organisations through which we can express our opinions – Patient Participation Groups, Healthwatch, Quality Innovation Productivity Prevention (QIPP) at Sussex Community NHS Trust. Many high-level NHS Trust Boards include one or more lay representatives.

We need a map to enable us to transmit our views along the most appropriate route.

Age UK Brighton & Hove information



Age UK Brighton & Hove Advocacy Service: Getting Older Voices Heard

Do you know an older person whose views and wishes are being ignored? Perhaps they find it harder to speak up because of frailty, illness or disability; or maybe ageist attitudes prevent others listening.

Our free Advocacy Service can support people of 50+yrs to resolve difficult situations and make important decisions. Our advocates enable people to make their views heard and secure their rights. We have helped people to resolve difficulties concerned with social care and health care, housing including repairs and adaptations, family and neighbour

disputes, and many other issues. We also provide advocacy support for those over 50yrs who care for someone else such as a spouse, partner, parent or friend.

Our advocates visit clients in their homes at a prearranged time. They talk to the older person to find out the issue and how they would like it to be resolved. Advocates ask questions and obtain information on the person's behalf, they explain information so the individual has all they need to make a decision. An advocate can make phone calls, help with writing letters, and attend meetings or appointments with the person they are supporting.

If you would like to volunteer or if you need some support to speak up, then phone Age UK Brighton & Hove on tel: 01273 720 603 or email: info@ageuk-bh.org.uk

We need you! Volunteer with Age UK Brighton & Hove

Age UK Brighton & Hove delivers a wide variety of services to many vulnerable older people; there is an ever increasing demand and without the help of our volunteers we would not be able to continue many of the vital services we have.

We involve volunteers across all areas of our organisation; even our governing board of trustees are volunteers!

There are so many reasons why people volunteer with us whether it is to meet new people, gain new skills, or to help their community; we welcome everyone, especially those who have retired or who have been made redundant in later life.

Here's what one of our volunteers said about volunteering for Age UK Brighton & Hove.

What do you enjoy most about volunteering for Age UK Brighton & Hove?

'Talking and engaging with fellow volunteers and clients and helping others, it makes me feel useful.'

What motivated you to volunteer at Age UK Brighton & Hove?

'I missed working and having something to do; I now have a sense of purpose.'



Jeannie Wakefield – Volunteer at AgeUK Brighton & Hove

What would you say to others thinking about volunteering for Age UK Brighton & Hove?

'You can give so much back. There are people with so many problems and we are able to help them; it is wonderful to be a part of that.'

Jeannie Wakefield – Volunteer Receptionist and Administrator since September 2011.

With your help we can deliver more services to older people that are in need, so please contact: Jayne Thompson (Volunteer & Training Coordinator) on tel: 01273 720 603.

Age UK Brighton & Hove Fundraising News

Mayor's Charity in 2013

Age UK Brighton & Hove is delighted to be one of this year's charities supported by the Mayor of Brighton & Hove. We look forward to a great fundraising year, working with our supporters, other chosen charities and the Mayor's office. Check our website: www.ageuk-bh.org.uk to find out about forthcoming events. For details about the Mayor's charities in 2013 and details of events see www.brighton-hove.gov.uk and search for 'Mayor's charities'.



The Big Knit 2013

It is time to 'knit one, purl one' for Age UK Brighton & Hove as the Big Knit gets under way for its 10th year in partnership with Innocent drinks. We are calling on knitters of all ages to join the Big Knit and help raise much needed funds to support older people in the city during the winter months. The money is used to buy emergency items such as heaters and blankets and to spread the word to older people living in the city on how to keep warm in winter.

You can download the pattern from our website or phone us on 01273 720 603. You can also join our Knitting Group on Wednesday afternoons from 2pm until 3.30pm and 'knit and natter' with others.

We have until 9th October to knit 3000 hats. Please ensure your hats are in this office before the closing date. With thanks for your support.

Donation of wool for the Big Knit is also very much appreciated, so do not hesitate to bring us your unwanted wool. We are at the Seven Dials, 29-31 Prestonville Road, BN1 3TJ.

Horizons – Age UK Brighton & Hove's Reablement Service

Horizons provides short-term support, helping older people to rebuild confidence and maintain independence following admission to hospital, or to prevent an admission to hospital. The service is part-funded by Brighton & Hove City Council and free of charge to clients.

We carry out an informal assessment with the client to establish whether the client will benefit from the type of support being offered.

Following the assessment, trained volunteers help clients work towards self-selected goals. Clients may wish to improve their mobility at home or practice walking independently outside. Other clients may wish to try using public transport again in order to go shopping or visit friends.

Wherever possible, clients are encouraged to identify a goal which has a social outcome, whether

it be something simple like posting a letter or something more ambitious like joining a group.

Clients are offered six weekly sessions, although further sessions can be arranged if the client is still making progress towards a goal. We keep in contact with clients while they are working with a volunteer in order to respond to changing needs. We also liaise closely with the volunteers, monitoring progress and looking for other services the clients might benefit from being signposted to.

Clients are referred to the service by Health or Social Care professionals, such as physiotherapists, GPs and members of the Adult Social Care team. We also see many people who refer themselves using the number below.

To learn more about this service, please contact us on tel: 01273 720 603.

LINK becomes Healthwatch

On 1st April LINK ceased to exist; Healthwatch was born.

Fortunately the Community & Voluntary Sector Forum, which has hosted LINK, won the contract to manage Healthwatch, so in many respects the handover was easy. Kerry Dowding and Elaine Elliott are now employed in similar tasks by Healthwatch; Jane Viner has been appointed to cover Claire Stevens' maternity leave; and Libby Young is Operations Manager.

The LINK Steering Group Committee, augmented by a few past volunteers, has become the Healthwatch Transition Group.

Whilst staff will be busy in the coming months creating a new structure for Healthwatch, some of LINK's activities will continue; the first of Healthwatch's monthly newsletters appeared at the beginning of May. The survey of physiotherapy is being relaunched.

To contact Healthwatch, telephone the helpline on 01273 810 235 (10am – 12 noon Monday to Friday). For all other enquiries, telephone: 01273 810 236 or email: enquiry@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk



Paying for social care

In the recent Queen's Speech the coalition government announced that a bill on paying for social care, based upon its response to the Dilnot report, would be presented to the present session of Parliament.

A little later it was said that by 2018 an integrated health and social care system would be in place – but that no increased funding would be available.

In the meantime our local Clinical Commissioning Group is working on procedures to provide an integrated system of care and support to older, frail patients living at home. A team of doctors, nurses and care workers will examine closely the needs of each patient to ensure that the highest quality of life is available to them. Ask your own G.P. for further details.

“You feel like you've got a friend.”

“It is very important. It's good to know what's going on. We don't feel so left out.”

(Members of the Patching Lodge Neighbourhood Group on reading *The Pensioner*)

Adult Social Care's City Summit by Peter Lloyd

This event was held in Hove Town Hall on 11 June. It was aimed particularly at the City Council's recipients of social care (nearly 4,500) and “Have your Say” was the event's sub-title. Councillor Rob Jarrett opened the meeting, presenting Adult Social Care's annual report: Local Account 2013 – How are we doing? He also defined seven questions, most of which sought to discover how far services met client-felt needs.

One participant, a woman now aged 34 years with multiple sclerosis for the past six years, described how a Personal Budget had helped her to receive appropriate support as her health problems changed.

Sitting around twelve tables, with a facilitator and eight or more participants, we posed the seven questions and expressed our responses on post-it slips which were placed on the walls. Each table was then given an issue which the post-it slips had highlighted. My own table was

asked to consider the impact of budget cuts. Most of our discussion revolved around the rising costs of care in a period of financial constraint. We concluded that the City Council should strive to increase provision of preventative care, though recognising that this might affect services providing care in acute cases.

The Local Account shows that the budget for Adult Social Care would be reduced in 2013-14 by 7.25% of the previous year's sum. These savings would be achieved by re-designing services and making them more efficient, whilst maintaining the quality of support.

This event was superbly organised; it will be repeated annually. But we must address the larger questions too – how, with an ageing population, are we to pay for the increasing costs of social care? Engagement, after all, means a dialogue in which each party expresses their goals, needs and ideas for action.

Staying put, moving on

Most, if not all, of us would prefer to spend our later years continuing to live independently in our own homes. However, for many of us a time will come when we will need support in our home or will have to move into a residential care or nursing home. But how can we, or with the help of others, find the support that meets our expectations and needs?

Nowadays care agencies and homes are mostly privately owned – and thus expect to be profitable to their owners and shareholders. Adult Social Care contracts with them to provide for their low-savings clients.

In our earlier issue (No. 43, Winter 2012, p5) Jo Tulloch outlined the work of the Lay Assessors Scheme which monitors domiciliary care agencies. In our July 27 public event she aired some of the most frequent shortcomings in service provision. There is often a lack of continuity of care workers – a new person each week perhaps. Again, a visit scheduled to last ½ hour becomes one of 15 to 20 minutes – perhaps because the agency does not schedule enough travel time between clients, or does not reimburse travel costs. Care workers may receive insufficient training.

One of the last activities of LINK (before it became Healthwatch, see p14) was the publication of its report 'Care Home Enter and View Visits: What We've Learned' by Kerry Dowding.

In order to assess the quality of life enjoyed by residents, trained volunteers visited 24 homes. These varied widely in size and in the levels and type of dependency of the residents.

Visits were made over lunch time, enabling the volunteers to observe interaction between residents and staff and to talk to a few residents. The visits were planned with the full co-operation of the managements and findings were discussed with them.

Overall, residents were happy with their home. Many of the suggestions offered concerning mealtimes – jugs of water and flowers on the table, meals served at table and not plated in the kitchen, choice and variation of seating – could be countered with equally strong arguments for the current procedures. What is important is that residents should be consulted about these arrangements – they should not feel that they are imposed on them.

The most common complaint made was the lack of social activities – "I'm bored to tears". Large homes (50+ residents) can often afford a mini-bus and to employ an activities organiser. Small homes clearly cannot, especially when council grants are frozen. Often there are too few interested residents to make an activity viable; some residents want to spend much time outside the home, others can hardly walk from bedroom to lounge.

Some homes seem isolated within their neighbourhood. Efforts could be made to involve volunteers from the local community – to organise activities and participate in them, or to escort residents to events outside the home.



Retirement is bad for your health!

A recent report from the Institute of Economic Affairs has, apparently, agreed that whilst one's health may improve immediately after stopping work, in the long term one's chances of experiencing depression rose by 40%, and of physical ill-health by 60%.

It is not clear how 'retirement' is isolated from all other aspects of ageing. But it does emphasise the importance of maintaining an active life – and one way of achieving this is by volunteering. There are a multitude of opportunities – explore them. For instance, phone the Volunteer Centre on 01273 737 888 or Age UK on 01273 720 603.



"It's a link, some-one is looking after our interests."

(Member of the Patching Lodge Neighbourhood Group on *The Pensioner*)

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Thank you all

...from Pensioner Action!

We must take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped us achieve so much – the various paid staff who have worked for Pensioner Action over its lifetime (Lila Hunnisett, Graham Lee, Myfan Jordan, Mandi Sherratt and Sue Goodwin); friends and colleagues in Age UK Brighton & Hove, the Older People's Council and in other voluntary sector organisations in the City; Council staff in Adult Social Care and then in Scrutiny who have helped distribute *The Pensioner*; Impetus, who have housed us; and, of course, our funders.

But most of all, we must thank YOU, the older people of Brighton & Hove, who have turned up to our public meetings, Neighbourhood Groups and various consultative events and helped to make them so lively and interesting, who have volunteered to distribute *The Pensioner*, helped out with administration, sat on the Pensioner Action Committee or *The Pensioner* Editorial Committee and done a thousand-and-one other things! It's been a joy and a privilege to work with you!

A final request: please remember to complete and return our freepost questionnaire on pages 7 - 10, as this may help to secure future funding for further issues of *The Pensioner*.

Pensioner Action – comments of an active member by Len Goldman

I have been a political activist from my early teens. As soon as I became a pensioner I joined the B&H Pensioners' Association and, soon after it was formed, I also joined the Pensioners' Forum (which became Pensioner Action). At the first public meeting I attended they called for people to stand for the Management Committee. I put my name forward and was elected. The editor of *The Pensioner* had resigned and I offered to take over. I felt qualified as I had edited two Forces' newsletters during the war, and the students' magazine at my training college. I have also written my autobiography in three volumes. I took over the journal in 2005, the pre-election period. At first, the Election Specials were produced by our Co-ordinator. The first edition I edited was in May of that year.

I chose headings to my editorials which, I hoped, would induce people to read on:

- What's the matter? (Urging people to "get organised.")
- Live longer – feel younger (advising that an active life kept one young).
- What are pensioners worth?
- Ageism, does it matter?
- 2000 pensioners stop the traffic in Blackpool (a report of the Pensioners' Parliament organised by the National Pensioners' Convention).

I considered that the purpose of the Forum was to advance the pensioners' cause and struggle for the betterment of the pensioners' lot. There were considerable differences of opinion as to how this was to be pursued but all were agreed that it was vitally necessary.

One of the main disabilities under which pensioners suffer is the widespread evil of ageism, a belief that the elderly are past it and therefore either to be ignored or patronised. This is not just spiritually hurtful but its practical expression is a neglect of our interests, especially as regards our pension. Did you know that over 2 million of us live below the poverty line?

I also felt it necessary to combat the notion that pensioners are a "burden". And I drew attention to the continued value and wealth creation of the many and varied products that we constructed when working: houses, hotels, restaurants, factories and so on. And the value added to future citizens by teachers and trainers when we were in our heyday.

In my early nineties, I decided I'd done my stint and jokingly suggested that some "youngster of eighty" should take over. In the event it was someone much younger and consequently the journal was technically greatly improved. As far as the content is concerned, others must judge that. It is sad that this is the last edition and the end of Pensioner Action. But don't despair, there are other excellent organisations of the older citizen - get in there and continue the struggle.



Len Goldman