

The Pensioner

Journal of Brighton & Hove Pensioner Action

No. 40, Autumn 2011

Westminster Politician at Pensioner Action Fuel Poverty Event

On the 26th of September, Pensioner Action held a successful and informative public meeting about Fuel Poverty. There were excellent guest speakers, including Caroline Lucas MP, Tom Chute from Brighton's 10:10 Campaign and Craig Golding from the Citizen's Advice Bureau. Questions and answers were taken, followed by break-out sessions providing information and advice about the confusing energy tariffs, how to switch to better energy deals, advice about ways to cut your fuel bills and information about the various grants and trusts available to help with meeting the costs of ever increasing utility bills.

Fuel poverty among older people is a big concern, as Government figures released in July indicate half those living in fuel poverty are over 60. Fuel poverty is defined by the government to be those households having to spend 10% of their income on fuel to keep their homes in satisfactory condition. In 2009, 4 million households (18% of total) in England were living in fuel poverty. Many are forced to choose between 'eating and heating', which can lead to significant adverse health effects.

Caroline Lucas MP gave an overview of what Parliament are doing to help combat fuel poverty. The Green Party believes that a free insulation scheme for every household is the way forward. By investing in energy efficiency, thousands of jobs could be created reducing unemployment figures as well as improving the housing stock. The Party is also pushing for a Bill to make it illegal to rent a property without a high standard of insulation. The current government has a target to eliminate fuel poverty by 2018; previously this target was 2016 and Caroline Lucas is campaigning to have this date reinstated. Caroline got a bit of a grilling from the audience as this is an ever increasing worry for older people, but she proved to give helpful and informative answers and it was clear that tackling fuel poverty is very high on her Party's agenda.

See page 3 for more details of help available and useful contacts for older people experiencing fuel payment difficulties.



Local news & information



Harvest share for the over 50s



People's Day 2011 report

Inside this issue

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Write to: Mandi Sherratt, Pensioner Action, 1st Floor, Intergen House, 65 - 67 Western Road, Hove, BN3 2JQ. **Tel:** 01273 229004
Email: mandi.sherratt@bh-impetus.org

Farewell and Welcome

On behalf of the Editorial Committee I must thank Lila most warmly for her work in editing the last five issues of The Pensioner. She has produced a truly excellent magazine- interesting and informative and most attractively designed. Few, if any local forums have produced such a magazine. As Lila advances her career we can but hope that her stay with us proves as productive as it deserves. Lila we are missing you.....

Peter Lloyd, Chair of Pensioner Editorial Committee.



Hello readers,

I am delighted to be stepping into Lila's shoes as the Editor of The Pensioner though Lila will be a hard act to follow! I am working closely with the team

here at Pensioner Action to help engage with and understand the issues that older people face in this city. I will help in any way I can to facilitate and improve your health and wellbeing and listen to your views as well as keep you informed of relevant and topical events and initiatives in the area. I welcome your views so please do contact me if you have any contribution you would like to make.

Mandi Sherratt, Editor

Getting a regular copy of The Pensioner

We print 4,000 hard copies of each issue - one tenth of the number of older people in our city. Most of these are delivered via libraries, sheltered housing schemes or by community nurses and care workers: it's all a bit hit or miss! There are three ways of making sure you receive each issue:

1. For a subscription fee of £3 per annum a copy will be posted to you on publication day. Complete the form below and send it to Mandi at the above address.
2. Request an email version which will then be mailed to you free of charge; email your request to: mandi.sherratt@bh-impetus.org
3. Past issues in PDF format are also available by email on request.

Subscribe to The Pensioner today! Annual Subscription Fee just £3

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- News on the Pensioner Action events
- Email correspondence and regular e-news

I wish to subscribe to The Pensioner (subscription renewable each Nov). Subscriptions = £3 but donations are welcome. I enclose a cheque for _____

Name: _____

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Cheques payable to Brighton & Hove Impetus, and returned to: Pensioner Action, 1st Floor, Intergen House, 65 - 67 Western Road, Hove, BN3 2QJ

Data Protection Act: The information you have provided on this form will be used to keep you up-to-date with Forum activities. On occasions, the Forum may decide it is appropriate to pass your contact details on to other organisations who wish to make contact with older people (i.e. Health Service, City Council, arts or community organisations). If you DO NOT wish your contact details to be passed on, please tick here

Signed _____ Date _____

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Fuel Help for Older People

Below is a list of help available for those having trouble meeting fuel costs (contd. from cover article).

Warmfront - Is a scheme to provide insulation and heating improvements to target groups, primarily those in receipt of designated benefits. Grants of up to £3,500 (£6,000 for alternative fuel systems) are available to fund up to 100% of the cost anywhere in England. Go to www.direct.gov.uk/en/Environmentandgreenerliving/Energyandwatersaving/Energygrants/DG_10018661. For local grants information call 01273 293144.

Fuel debts - Under the voluntary code of practice monitored by Ofgem, vulnerable consumers must not have their gas/electricity supply cut off for non-payment of bills. A payment plan or pre-payment meter should be offered. Under a payment plan the customer makes regular weekly or monthly payments to pay off the debt and meet on going charges. A pre-payment meter is a much more expensive way of paying for energy.

Energy Saving Trust - A not-for-profit organisation offering a wide range of advice and information on ways to cut fuel bills, including solar heating and electricity - go to their website at www.energysavingtrust.org.uk / or tel: 0800 512 012.

National Energy Action - Undertakes research and campaigns, and advises installers. Tel: 0191 261 5677 / web: www.nea.org.uk.

EDF Energy Trust - Is a charity that helps "the fuel poor", by grants to both individuals and organisations working in the field of fuel poverty. www.edfenergytrust.org.uk

Brighton and Hove Citizens Advice provides advice for people with fuel debts and supports applications to the EDF Energy Trust - see the website at www.citizensadvice.org.uk/brightonhovecab.htm or call 0845 1203710. Located at 1 Tisbury Road, Hove.

Home Heat Helpline - Help for those struggling with fuel bills. Provides advice and information on benefits, grants for insulation and on how your supplier can help by arranging payment schedules www.homeheathelpline.org.uk or call free on 0800 336699.

Price comparison websites - Are you on the best tariff from the cheapest supplier for your gas and electricity? There are a number of websites around that can help you identify the best deals without recommending any one in particular - an example is U-Switch - go to www.uswitch.com or put "energy comparison" into your search engine.

STOP PRESS! Warm Home Discount

For more on the incoming £120 energy rebate for those on pension credit, call 0800 336699.



Readers – Please send us your letters, poems, thoughts and comments. We do want to know what you are thinking!

We want to publish and promote organizations and activities run by older people for older people. There is so much that we are doing for ourselves. Articles of 200 – 300 words are welcome. Please send them to: mandi.sherratt@bh-impetus.org

We also need people to distribute the Pensioner - so if you can offer a hand, please get in touch!



Brighton and Hove Federation of Disabled People launch a new services noticeboard!

The BH FED's exciting new 'Business and Services Noticeboard' is now LIVE on our website www.bhfederation.org.uk/bsn

- Are you looking for a tradesman e.g. a plumber or handyman?
- Or maybe you're trying to find a nailcutter or hairdresser to come to your home?
- Do you want someone reliable who has had disability awareness training?
- If the answer is 'YES', then the Business and Services Noticeboard is for you!

It's a list of local businesses and services who have taken part in our disability awareness training and signed up to our Code of Conduct, agreeing to provide 'a good service at a fair price'.

There are more details on the website, or contact Jane Binns 01273 229269 or 0790 026 1551 or email jane.binns@bhfederation.org.uk for more details.

It's a new project and there are only a dozen or so businesses on there at the moment. However, it's growing all the time, so please keep looking for new listings and, if there are any businesses you know of who might be interested, please let them know about it.

Networking for Health A Pensioner Action public meeting

Tuesday 15 November, 2 - 5pm

Brighton Unitarian Church, New Road, featuring presentations and panel-style 'question time' on primary care services with:

Dr Xavier Nallentamby, Dr Anne Miners & Juliet Warburton

With stalls from LINK, Sussex Community Partnership, Albion in the Community and many others.

- Competitions and prizes
- Healthcare activities and information
- Freebies!

Just turn up on the day - or for more information, call Myfan on 01273 422971.

pensioner

action



Pensioner Action - Empowering Older People

Adult Abuse - break the silence



Last year there were 1,154 reports of vulnerable adults suffering abuse in Brighton & Hove alone.

Abuse can happen to anyone in any setting, and it can take many different forms. Financial, sexual, psychological and abuse by neglect are just a few examples.

Most reports of abuse of vulnerable adults come through health or care professionals. This could mean that only the 'tip of the iceberg' cases get reported and there are people experiencing abuse who never get the help they need.

Adult Social Care Services in Brighton & Hove are running a publicity campaign to raise awareness of adult abuse and how to report concerns. The message is that stopping abuse is everyone's responsibility.

To find out more, visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/adult-abuse.

To report adult abuse, call Brighton & Hove City Council Adult Social Care on 01273 295555.

Southern Housing Group Limited is a charitable housing association



Retirement flats for rent to people over 60 in Martlet House, Bannings Vale, Saltdean

- Affordable rent
- Very good bus connections
- Live independently in a safe and secure community
- Support available
- Communal lounge, laundry, guest room and sea views
- We operate our own waiting lists

To find out more call **0300 303 1063**



Unlocking the potential
of people and places

All Together for Civil Society Campaign Pledge

Pensioner Action is a project of a larger charity, Impetus, which works to empower local people. Below, Steve Lawless (Impetus CEO) details a campaign pledge Impetus have recently signed up to: "In view of the current cuts in public spending the Board has signed Impetus up to the All Together for Civil Society campaign pledge. The aims of the campaign are:

- Give a national voice to all those affected by the cuts
- Rebut the argument that there is no alternative
- Promote a vibrant, sustainable and autonomous civil society

The campaign was set up by a partnership of national voluntary organisations and the TUC. More information is available on the Impetus blog website, found at: <http://bhimpetus.wordpress.com/2011/03/31/all-together-for-civil-society-campaign-pledge/> or by contacting the office."

Neighbourhood Group News

60+ Action runs meetings for older people in five neighbourhoods across Brighton and Hove (see below for details).
Anyone can join in - get in touch!



Representatives of Fabrica Gallery visited the groups this summer.

Over the past months, the Pensioner Action neighbourhood groups (formerly 60+ Action) have enjoyed a wide variety of guest speakers and visitors. Reminiscence groups such as Turner Stories Community Oral History Project gave members the chance to share memories and experiences of old Brighton; while updates about new services from Age UK and Information Prescriptions helped them look to modern times, with sessions on internet information services and social networking initiatives to help older people (see www.ipbh.org.uk). A cheap handyman service and HomeSafe home security project offered by InTouch Support also interested members (see the website at www.intouchsupport.co.uk or 01273 234258).

The summer months saw the pilot of Central Hove group at St John's Café, next to Cornerstone Community Centre. The drop-in format attracted both day centre attendees and visitors to the café. The sessions have been mutually beneficial with the Centre – run by Impact Initiatives – benefitting from a regular forum where information can be shared with their regulars and for Pensioner Action, who have gained a new audience, already coming up with useful suggestions

and local issues to keep group worker Myfan on her toes. We can now confirm the Central Hove group will continue into next year (see groups' dates on the right.)

The groups were also visited by Fabrica Gallery and as a result, the gallery held a Private View of the artist Melanie Manshot, especially for 60+ members, which was a great success. An idea from Pensioner Action that Fabrica help West Hove members design murals for walls at Muriel House – where fire safety considerations mean hanging pictures have been removed – also looks to be moving forward after a positive response from the council. Watch this space for more about the 'Murals at Muriel' project. For more information about Fabrica call 01273 778646 or email: office@fabrica.org.uk

Fabrica Gallery are currently exhibiting 'Gathering' - an exhibition of two film works by London-based artist Melanie Manshot - all are welcome to visit. Both works seek to examine our collective identities, how we behave in public space, and reflect Melanie Manshot's continued interest in portraiture as a performative event. Call 01273 778646 for more details. Fabrica Gallery is based at 40 Duke Street, Brighton.

What are the neighbourhood groups?

The neighbourhood groups work together to enable older people to tackle issues which affect our everyday lives, such as:

Hospital and GP services
- Public transport - Social services - Benefits
- Community Safety - Environmental issues - and anything else which may be affecting you as an older person in Brighton & Hove.

We have regular speakers, give information on services, encourage debate, friendship and work together to get the changes we want for our neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhood Groups Diary

Central Hove Group. St John's Centre (next to Cornerstone Community Centre, Church Rd, Hove). 10.30am-12.00pm • Oct 12, 2011, Dec 21, 2011, Feb 29, 2012 •

Craven Vale Group. Craven Vale Resource Centre, Queensway, Craven Vale • 2pm-4pm. • November 30th 2011, January 30, 2012 February 27, March 27, April 24, May 29, June 26, July 31, Sept 25, Oct 30, Nov 27, 2012 •

Kemp Town/St James/Hanover Group. Patching Lodge, Eastern Road • 2.30 - 4pm. • November 8th, 2011, January 17, 2012, March 13, May 15, July 10, September 18, November 13, 2012 •

West Hove Group. Muriel House, Ingram Crescent West, Portland Road, Hove. • 2.30 to 4pm. PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE!! - November 22nd, 2011, Jan 24, 2012, March 20, May 22, July 17, Sept 25, Nov 20, 2012 2012 •

Moulsecoomb Group. The Orchards, Moulsecoomb Way, Moulsecoomb • 2.30 - 4pm. Nov 1st, 2011, Jan 10, 2012, March 6, May 8, July 3, Sept 11, Nov 6, 2012 •

Letters

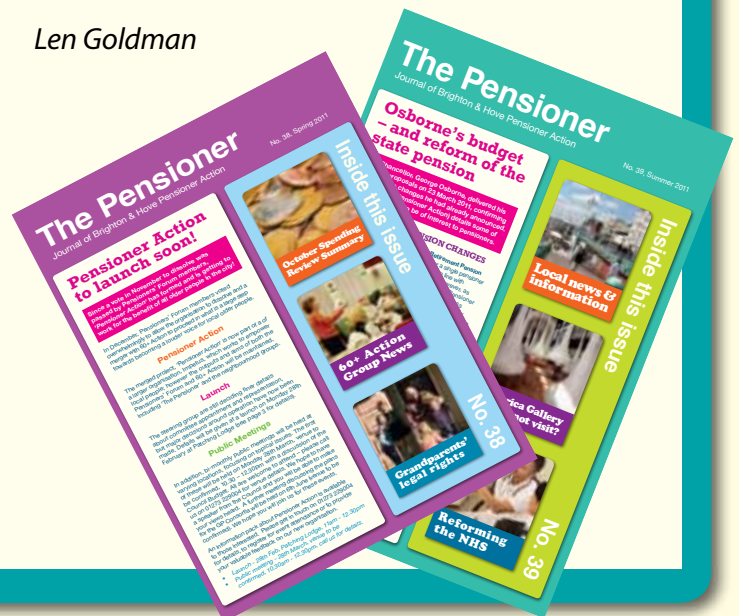
Send letters to: Mandi Sherratt, The Pensioners' Forum, 1st Floor, Intergen House, 65-67 Western Road, Hove, BN3 2JQ, or email mandi.sherratt@bh-impetus.org - unfortunately we can't print them all & some may be edited, but we really want your opinions!

Dear Editor

Another excellent issue. Congratulations! I particularly liked Peter Jackson's letter, pointing out what the government is doing to our pensions and conditions. But he seems to be suggesting that we can't materially change things unless we have a "new political system." I agree that our present system is unfair, leads to great hardship (and not just for pensioners) and must be changed. But the implication that we will have to wait for this before we can significantly improve our conditions is a policy of despair, because the revolutionary change won't happen very soon now. No, read the demands put forward and campaigned for by the National Pensioners Convention and you will see how to pursue the next steps in our struggle. And that brings me to the comment that we

are "apolitical". Not so. Our demands are on the government and have far-reaching political implications. We are not party political. But that's a different matter.

Len Goldman



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A new and unique fingernail cleaning, cutting and filing service in your own home or in hospital for older people and the disabled, promoting good hand hygiene practices to assist in infection control management. Of the combined 10 and 5 year knowledge, skills and experience of working in Health & Social care, we aim to ensure that the service is affordable, beneficial and, will meet the needs of each individual. We are a fully insured and CRB checked provider.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND APPOINTMENTS PLEASE CONTACT ANNA BROMHAM OR VERITY DELO ON: 01273 50 77 26.

We are pleased to be a member of the Fed's Business and Services Noticeboard - for more information on this and other Fed Services please go to www.thefedonline.org.uk.

the Fed
centre for independent living

Older People's Organisations

Some organisations are managed and controlled by older people; our now dissolved Pensioners' Forum was one such. Others are managed by younger people; they advocate on behalf of older people. The former association of older people are usually led by volunteers, though if funding permits they may employ a younger person to carry out administrative tasks. The latter are staffed by salaried workers, though they may use older people as volunteer service providers, to serve as Trustees or on advisory committees.

Conceptually the distinction is clear – though in practice it may be blurred – e.g. the member of an advocacy service who helps and older people to express their needs and analysis of a situation. However we can all see the difference between "I want to do this for myself" – thus encouraging control and independence – and "let me do this for you" – which creates dependency.

We live in an ageing society; but the majority of us are relatively fit, of sound mind and active. We should be encouraged – and funded where necessary – to create our own organisations though which our needs are met. Organised BY older people not FOR older people should be our rallying call.

Donate to Pensioner Action!

Pensioner Action relies on your support to keep The Pensioner going and to help make local older people heard to the people who make the important decisions. Every penny is vital! If you'd like to make a donation to Pensioner Action, there are two simple ways:

- 1) **send a cheque**, made out to 'Brighton and Hove Impetus' with a cover note specifying that it is a donation for Pensioner Action. Impetus are our parent organisation, a local charity working to empower local people.
- 2) An even easier way for those of you who have a mobile phone is **donating by text message**. Simply send a text to the following number: 70070

In the message body, put the following code and the amount you want to donate in the message body, and press 'send':

PACT11 £5

In the example above, the £5 is just an example, and should be replaced by any amount you want to send us. The money will show up on your mobile phone bill as 'B & H Impetus' (or be deducted from your credit if you are on pay-as-you-go).

Thank you!



Hove & Portslade Aid in Sickness Association
Registered Charity No: 257002

Unwell? Health Problems? Need a Little Help?

☺ *Pleased to meet you!*

We are a local charity helping Hove and Portslade residents with health problems by giving small sums of money for items which will improve their quality of life.



Child and baby equipment



Travel tickets



Medical Appliances



Mobility

☺ *Who can apply?*

Doctors, Nurses, Social workers, Carers, Family or Friends can apply on behalf of the Applicant.

☺ *Interested?*

Please contact the secretary giving brief details of the need for help.

You can telephone: 01273 727560
or email: audrey_t@hotmail.com

or write to:
Hove and Portslade Aid in Sickness
C/o The Vicarage, Wilbury Road
HOVE BN3 3PB

Growing Old is Expensive: How can we afford it?

We are living longer, for many of us forty years 'in work' is followed by twenty years of 'retirement'. When we cease to earn a salary/wage how do we pay for our needs?

- We need a regular income to cover everyday needs. This is provided by our own pensions, to which we have contributed whilst working. We also need contingent funding to cover our health and social care needs as we experience the fragilities of old age. Our health needs are covered by our NHS
- A basic issue: how much is to be covered by universal state benefit and how much are we expected to provide individually. Yes state benefits are, of course, funded by us – through taxation, national insurance etc.
- We may pay for our old age:
 - Through taxation and state allowance and pension contributions paid throughout our working life
 - Through dipping into our accumulated savings
 - Through personal insurance policies taken out during our working life or on retirement
 - Through 'death tax' paid from our estate

Thus, we must either 'save' during our working lives or the next generation, our children and grand children, pay from their earnings (but the ratio of 'working' adults to 'retired' people is falling.)

The issues are certainly complex – which is why, possibly, governments have been so slow to act!



Help Pensioner Action tackle unfair energy tariffs!

It was clear from the feedback at the recent Fuel Poverty public meeting that consumers find the energy suppliers tariffs a minefield - there are no simple answers, but we feel the regulators could be doing a lot more to make things simpler and more comprehensible for everyone to understand. Join us in tackling tariffs by contacting Ofgem: Steve McBurney – Head of Energy Efficiency Tel: 020 7901 7063 / Email: steve.mcburney@ofgem.gov.uk.

Together we can lobby for affordable prices and a fairer energy market in a language we can understand!



Don't Fall Down by Francis Tonks

I am rather good at falling down. When I went to Australia for the first time, I took a shower, soaped the soles of my feet, stood up and then gently slid to the floor. That is because I am used to taking a bath. In the bad weather, the gentle slope outside our house becomes an ice glacier, and quite dangerous. My neighbour has broken his arm.

Every year, half a million older people attend A & E after a fall and 200,000 have fractures. AgeUK is campaigning to prevent falls and ensure the NHS does its best to treat older folk who have fallen. This scheme is called 'Stop Falling: Start Saving Lives and Money'. The emphasis must be on preventing the broken bones which have disastrous effects on the physical and mental well-being of so many people.

Last winter, I ventured out onto the icy path to do the morning's shopping. I slipped, my feet slid away from under me, and I fell onto my back. Apart from a slight bump on the back of my head, I was unhurt. I decided to take action. I searched for studs for my shoes. I went to Cotswold, Millets and Open Space. All had sold out. Finally, I went out to Portslade and got the last studs in town. They are the solution.

Made in China, costing £19.99 last year, the studs fit on the soles of your shoes with a sort of rubber harness that goes over the top of your shoes or boots. They give a firm grip on the road surface and stop you falling over. Before the bad weather sets in, I suggest you get some studs while stocks last, and prevent a nasty fall.



Networking for Health

A Pensioner Action public meeting

Tuesday 15 November, 2 - 5pm

Brighton Unitarian Church, New Road - join us! See p3 for more details or call 01273 229004.

Working50plus

Helping older people back into work by Val Cane, Working50plus Group

Working50plus is a group that originally arose from a course designed to give older people the skills necessary to return to the workplace. When this came to an end, a few of the course participants, notably Jean, Terry and Philip, decided it would be a pity for the objectives to end with it. And so they founded the existing group, which has been around for several years now. However, as you can imagine, the group has evolved as time went by. We now have a much wider membership and with it various activities have been added.

What does this group have to offer me? Well, while we still have speakers on various work-related topics such as pensions and DSS issues at our twice-monthly meetings, and share expertise and information on our job searches (in my case, working for the Census recently) we also recognise that not all the current members are looking for work; in fact some are very happily retired. This is no bar to joining our group, though in fact we have debated from time to time whether our slightly misleading title should be altered. The only membership criterion is being 50 plus, though naturally we don't require proof of this! Some of our members are into their seventies as well. There is a good gender balance, approximately 50:50 which makes for a good social atmosphere.

So, activities...

Well, we meet twice a month (on the first and third Tuesdays) from 11 to 1.30 at the Cornerstone Centre,

which is in Church Road, Hove, BN3 2FL (near the corner, just off First Avenue). Recognising that a meeting at this time cuts across most people's lunchtime, we provide materials for light lunches, and also hot drinks, and ask for a small donation to cover costs.

The rest of our social calendar involves a meal out once a month at an agreed venue, and trips to agreed destinations, mostly to London by train. We are a very democratic group and are open to suggestions of other activities you might like to put forward. Thus, to date the club has been able to pay for travel to London, though we could do with some fundraising to keep our funds healthy. To this end, a few of us have in mind to have a car boot sale, giving part of the proceeds to the club and keeping the rest ourselves, for example.

We've also been fortunate in securing grants for appropriate activities, as we involve ourselves in the community, (such as collaborating in research with universities). And of course, we are members of the local Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF). Due to my involvement with the club I have been elected as a CVSF rep in the equalities strand, with particular reference to older people's issues.

So why not give it a try?

Call 07757 169172 or you can look up our website: www.working50plus.co.uk: or email us at working50plus@live.co.uk. Val Cane.

Transport of Delight!

By Chris Barfield

Over the past few months, the NHS have been reviewing the Patient Transport Service in Sussex. At present there are eight separate contracts for non-urgent patient transport in the county. The intention is to replace these with one county-wide contract with a single provider. I went to a consultation meeting in June in Brighton about this, attended by representatives of older people and patients in the area.

We agreed that generally the service itself was very good, once you were in it! The vehicles were modern, accessible and comfortable, the drivers and staff were very professional and helpful, coped well with unexpected problems and built up good relations with regular users. However, there were inefficiencies on the organisational side, with some smaller GP surgeries not so good at processing new requests, leading to uncertainty about whether journeys had been booked or not, (surgeries often don't confirm this with the patient), and panicky phone calls when the transport doesn't arrive on time. There were also problems with users forgetting their appointments and so not being ready, or being unable to keep them for other reasons but not informing the service (a very high proportion of the booked journeys are aborted for reasons like this, at a cost of £169 per journey!).

Suggestions for improvement included having a single county-wide phone number which is easily remembered and answered by real people with local knowledge. Technology could be used to make communication and the use of vehicles more efficient, and a reminder service could be introduced to avoid the many aborted pickups. The service should also consider operating 24 hours in order to avoid unnecessary hospital admission when no transport home was available for a patient late at night.

Following the consultation, the new contract will be awarded in November this year, to start in April 2012.

More information about patient transport services:

- 1. Information Prescription** is a useful health information service with information on patient transport services across Sussex. The link to the relevant web page is: <http://www.ipbh.org.uk/transport/transportfordisabled/index.asp>, or you can call 0800 013 0251.
- 2. The Bluebird Community Partnership** operates a service for patients, carers and visitors from their homes to the Princess Royal Hospital, Haywards Heath or the Royal Sussex County Hospital, Brighton. The bus runs from 8.00am to 6.00pm, Mondays to Fridays. To book, phone 01444 471919 (mornings only) or you can book through the hospital transport bureau. To book a journey on the day please phone 07711 034519.
- 3. St Johns Ambulance** provide a range of patient transport services, transferring patients to a wide range of non-emergency medical appointments such as admissions to and discharge from hospitals, clinics, nursing homes and other medical facilities. They have contracts with many NHS trusts across the UK and also with a number of private sector institutions. For further information, contact 08700 10 49 50 to be put in touch with your local branch.
- 4. The Red Cross** have a transport service which offers freedom and independence for people who cannot get about easily or use public transport. They help people to get to medical appointments, to do everyday essentials like shopping, or even just to get out of the house and socialise. For more information, contact 0800 0280831.



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Pensioner Action

is here to raise your concerns, not only in this magazine, but through our committee, who are members of steering groups and older people's organisations in the city. Get in touch and let us know what's up...



Paying for Social Care

by Peter Lloyd

The issue:

Under the NHS, medication and operations prescribed by a doctor are free of charge to older people. One may 'go private' for higher levels of care; one purchases over-the-counter cough mixtures, pain killers, vitamin supplements etc. Thus, health care for an insulin dependant diabetic is almost completely free.

However if one becomes confused through dementia, or experiences impaired mobility the picture is very different. One's social care i.e. help with personal care such as getting dressed or domestic chores, is not free for most people. Only those with assets (savings or home ownership below £23,000) are eligible for free care provided by Adult Social Care and then only for the higher levels of need.

This situation seems grossly unfair.

The past

The Labour Government in 1997 set up a Royal Commission which recommended a system of free social care. This was accepted in Scotland but rejected for England and Wales.

In mid-2009, the Labour Government published a Green Consultation Paper advocating a National Care Service to parallel the NHS. It set out five options for funding this; two were rejected – a fully state funded system (too early) and completely individual responsibility (unfair). The remaining three suggested different levels of individual and state responsibility.

A White Paper published just before the General Election of 2010 showed that majority opinion tended towards a

high level of state funding. It advocates further discussions to find all party support for funding mechanism.

The incoming Coalition Government set up a Commission under Andrew Dilnot to further these discussions. It produced an Interim Report in July 2011 and promised a full report in the spring of 2012 which would be followed by a White Paper and legislation.

The main suggestions put forward by Dilnot are:

That the eligibility level for free Adult Social Care be raised to £100,000 (but approximately 70% of older people own a flat or house worth £150,000 - £ 200,000 or more).

The first £35,000 costs of social care should be borne by the individual; above that the state will pay. (This would cover about two year's costs of social care within a care home. Thus, those spending much longer in such accommodation would be spared the loss of all savings, property etc).

Dilnot states that these proposals would cost £1.7 billion (compared with the £100 billion cost of the NHS).

Modes of contributing towards state funding and personal allowance remain yet to be outlined.

Such proposals seem to provide a very limited improvement to the existing situation.

What form of National Care Service?

- An NCS that provides only for the most acute needs, or one that provides a level of preventative care
- What will be the balance between state funded services (with compulsory contributions) and individual responsibility through insurance and savings?

We should not wait until the Government publishes its own plans. We should, ourselves, be debating these issues now.

Health or social care...

Is something bothering you?

Tell Brighton and Hove's LINK all about it.

We have powers to make change happen.

We're here to help you get the health and social care services you want. Be part of the LINK, it is your voice that will make a big difference.

Contact us on: 01273 810235 or visit www.bhlink.org



Energy saving tips:

- Take a shower instead of a bath
- Use energy saving lightbulbs (this may save you up to £10 per year per bulb)
- When cooking on the hob, always use a lid on your pan.



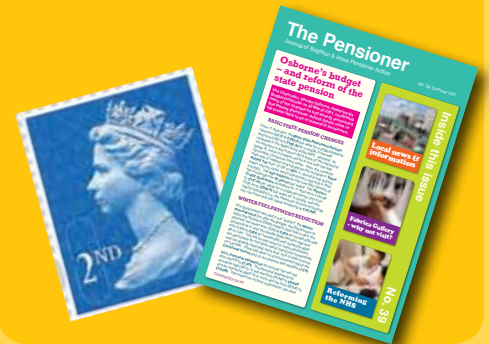
Older people in Brighton and Hove – How many are there?

The total population of our city is at present estimated to be 256,300; this is predicted to rise to 269,000 by 2020 – a 5% increase compared to a national increase of 7.4%. So older people form about a fifth of the electorate – we should make our voice heard! Of the current population, 35,900 (14% of the total) are over 65. This number is likely to fall slightly in the coming decade. However the number of very old people will rise substantially – currently 6,500 are over 85 and 2,400 are over 90; the latter figure will rise by 42% to 3,400 in 2020.

Whilst we must continually be aware of the needs of those vulnerable older people with support needs, we must also remember that the majority of older people are active and independent. We are not a small category creating a burden on society – we have much to contribute and this contribution should be fostered and recognised. *Data from the City Council's 'State of the City Report', 2011.*

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See inside front cover for details!



Pensioner Action – In Action

Our bi-monthly talks and discussions on issues affecting older people have continued. At our first meeting on March 28th (and reported in our Summer issue, no. 39, page 4), we discussed the City Council's Budget.

Our next meeting held in Hove Methodist Church on June 6th featured a presentation by Martin Campbell, Head of Community Partnerships and Relationships, Brighton and Hove PCT, (given in his absence by Myfan Jordan) on the coming NHS Reforms. He described how commissioning of services would in future be made, not by the PCT, but by GP Commissioning Consortia. He outlined what GPs would be responsible for, and the role of the local authority in Public Health. A lively discussion followed.

On 25th July we met in the Friends' Meeting House for a question and answer session. Our panellists from the PCT and NHS were Juliet Warburton (Chief Operating Officer of the Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group),

Peter Flavell (Patient Experience Manager of the Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals Trust) and Jane Lodge (Patient Engagement and Experience Lead for the Clinical Commissioning Group).

Questions were put by our lively audience of some 40 older people raising issues experienced by themselves or posed in 60+ Action Group meetings. They ranged widely, from the regular complaints about hospital food and transport, to the appropriate methods of making complaints. Throughout, our panellists asserted the importance of listening to the views and experiences of older people and we decided to explore the setting up of a number of focus groups to examine specific issues.

These meetings have been most lively – it is impossible to report all the issues raised; do come along to our future meetings (details of our next meeting are on page 3).

Poems from readers

Reflections

I glance in the mirror and what do I see?
A little old lady looking back at me.
Who is she I wonder, with her wrinkly brow?
Oh goodness! I realise it's me, here and now.
Where is the girl who ran free as a bird
Over meadows and streams, and was often absurd
She's still in there somewhere and comes to the fore
When playing with children, or walking the shore.
So I give her a smile, and we both quite agree
I am perfectly happy to simply be me.

Meg Reeves

Retirement

I dreaded the time when I'd have to retire,
Not knowing how I would pass each long hour
But now that it's here, I have to say
It's no trouble to fill each and every day.
There are new friends to meet in clubs all around
To talk over thoughts; ideas abound.
It stimulates brain cells that often lay dormant
Leaves time to enjoy things without too much format.
Sometimes it's hard to eke out the money
But eases the stress when you find something funny.
Second childhood is good when friends phone and say,
It's really good weather, can you come out to play?
I waited too long to retire I am sure
Should have done it much sooner, when just 24.

Meg Reeves

Jam and wasp sandwiches - by C.C. Fraser

Many organisations take a rest in the summer – but not so the Brighton and Hove Pensioners' Association. Like the Bluebell Girls of wartime fame, we never close. This year our summer meetings were not dependant on guest speakers, but ourselves.

In July, Connie French, a long time member, gave us a lively outline of our life. She is a true Brightonian, having been born in Springfield Road, Brighton, in 1924, with one much older brother. Although she comes from a long line of blacksmiths, her mother was a cook and her father a railway worker and market gardener. Except for the experience of her fathers market garden – the greenhouse being too 'hot in the summer and too cold in the winter', which gave her a permanent dislike of gardening – Connie enjoyed her pre-war childhood, summer being humorously remembered for 'jam and wasp sandwiches'. She learned to play the piano, a pleasure continued into adult years, and in 1934 she gained a scholarship to Worthing High School for Girls. The only problem with this was the cost of the blazer, which meant that Connie's mother bought it from a cheaper outfitters than the official one, so it was the wrong shade of green!

War came in Connie's teens, but it was overshadowed by her mother's 'terrible stroke' in 1940, though she did not die until 6 years later. Meanwhile, the war continued with 'barbed wire everywhere', blighting her beloved Downs which, as she says, 'are so important to me'. Not all was bleak in the war. Dancehalls were the favourite venues for teenagers, and Connie was no exception. She remembers the Regent as 'a beautiful place' where she tried to dance the jitter-bug and met Ted, a young man whom she would marry in 1948.

Meanwhile, Connie's 'very sound working-class upbringing' was tested in the world of work. At first, as a junior reporter on the Worthing Herald, remembered most for her dislike of the editor. Then, after her mother died, she spent two years working in the public library.

Her husband Ted had settled employment with the Gas Board, and their three children – two girls and a boy – were developing well when Connie decided to undertake a specialist course of four years training in social work, which she describes as 'a very good training' for the rest of her working life employed by the Council Welfare Dept. There were problems in the 1970s due to the amalgamation of departments, which resulted in her being more involved in the childrens' department – 'a very sobering time'.



Meanwhile, Connie had joined the Preston Ward of the Labour Party and became membership secretary, making lasting friendships from her fellow members. During this time, the severe headaches which had plagued her for many years gave way to an eye disease. This meant that Connie slowly lost her sight and is today totally blind. Fortunately, she has a wonderful memory for detail and such animation in re-telling, that we were all completely 'hooked' by it.

No self-pity. As she cheerfully says, she believes she has been 'very fortunate in life'.

Our August meeting was a 'Have your say', where members could raise any concern they felt would benefit by a wider discussion. Amongst these was a passionately argued contribution by Francis Tonks. Having noted that most of us are Co-op members, he explained that, despite the Co-operative Society's ethical policy, he had discovered that some products which were labelled as though from Israel, were in fact from Palestinian land illegally occupied by Israelis. It was for us to protest to the Co-operative management if we found that they were betraying their own ethical policy in this way. Francis' arguments were strongly supported by Len Goldman, the outstanding past editor of this magazine.

Future meetings of the Pensioners' Association:

13th December – John Henty (Parish Pump Radio)

10th January – Roger French (Brighton and Hove Buses)

All meetings are at Patching Lodge, 10.30 for 11.00am start. Membership fee is £3 per year. For enquiries, please contact Isla Robertson - tel: 01273 721655.

The value of forgiveness in later life – by Clive Taplin

Recently, having at last written my will and de-cluttered my home I thought I could face life's 'last great adventure' with quiet equanimity, but I still felt unsettled in my mind. Focussing on this I found unresolved issues concerning forgiveness lying like cold pebbles deep down in my heart. Some were to do with needing to forgive those who had hurt me, others with needing to gain the forgiveness of people I had hurt, and still others requiring forgiveness of myself.

We are only human, imperfect. We make mistakes, are weak and afraid. We are not to blame, it has been handed down to us through the generations. We have the choice between good and bad (or love and fear) but we cannot know what impulses we have inherited, and we are all fashioned from the same clay.

You may say "my whole family was killed", or "my child was murdered; I can never forgive"; and of course such acts can never be condoned or allowed to go unpunished. Some things may seem impossible to forgive, but the harder it is, the greater will be the relief you will experience. Whether or not you feel justified you are allowing something beyond your control, i.e. other people's actions to steal your peace. No-one has the right or power to affect your state of mind unless you permit it. Taking responsibility for our inner serenity is enormously empowering. What is more important, to be right or to be happy?

Bearing grudges, feeling resentment, anger and hatred is exhausting. It produces toxic emotions, creating stress and high blood pressure which can lead to illness.

Forgiving yourself and others and gaining their forgiveness is essential for peace and contentment. It releases a tremendous amount of energy, joy and happiness, bringing mental, spiritual and physical health benefits. It breaks down those cold pebbles of pain and sets you free.

Here is a suggested forgiveness exercise, but you can devise your own if you prefer. The important thing is that it should

come from the heart, not merely the mind, and it must come with love, as hard as that may be. It doesn't matter if the person is alive or deceased, but to be able to contact them by letter, telephone or especially face to face would be especially rewarding. If they are unwilling to forgive you, you can still forgive them their unforgiveness, and yourself for inflicting the perceived wrongdoing. Recently, two estranged friends of mine, unknown to each other, approached me voluntarily and apologised for their actions. It was wonderful to shake hands with them and renew our friendship.

So.....

- Find a peaceful place where you won't be disturbed. The countryside or your garden is ideal, but your comfy chair, the bath or even your bed is fine.
- Perhaps light a candle to aid relaxation. Close your eyes. Take several deep breaths, inhaling peace, exhaling difficult feelings. Say a prayer if you think it might help.
- Envision the person sitting in front of you, or on a TV screen. Share with them what is in your heart with as much compassion and kindness as possible. Imagine the person hearing and receiving your words. Say in your heart "I forgive you and release you unconditionally. I withhold no forgiveness. You are free and I am free and so it is. For this I am grateful".
- Feel how good it is to let go. Mentally give thanks to yourself for taking the time and finding strength to do this, and to the other person.
- Allow the gratitude to fill your heart. Gently open your eyes knowing that you can repeat your exercise whenever you feel the need.

I wish you all happiness in your precious life.



People's Day Report

People's Day was a fantastic community event held way back on the 18th of June 2011, bringing people together to meet each other, have fun and celebrate the diverse communities that make up our City. It took place in and around New Road and Jubilee Street, with 10 Zones and over 50 activities for the crowds to enjoy, including dancing and singing, food stalls, games and much more.

Pensioner Action was present in three Zones – it ran reminiscence activities in the History Zone and ball games in the Pavilion Gardens as part of the Play Zone, whilst the main stall was well-placed in Jubilee Street in the Health and Well-being Zone. The threatened rain held off, but it was incredibly windy and often, at the main stand, passers-by helpfully and energetically joined in the unscheduled game of "Retrieve the blown-away leaflets". All three areas were kept very busy and the Pensioner Action enthusiasts who manned them were never bored! We spoke to many fascinating people (not forgetting the other stall-holders!) and signed up over 30 new members. A big "Thank You" to everyone who visited our stalls and to Groundworks, who very kindly donated games and volunteers to our 60+ Playground – we hope you enjoyed it all as much as we did!



Top: Pensioner Action Chair, Sue Howley, and the Mayor of Brighton. Bottom: PA Group Worker Myfan Jordan and PA Committee member Francis Tonks.

Volunteer...we need you!

Pensioner Action needs volunteers to undertake anything of a number of tasks, which could include:

- Distributing The Pensioner magazine
- Writing articles for The Pensioner
- Joining our steering group
- Taking action on issues we receive
- Campaigning or helping at events
- Envelope stuffing
- Researching
- Project work
- Writing letters and emails to service providers
- Publicity and marketing
- Updating our website
- Fundraising

To get in touch or for more details, email us at mandi@pensioneraction.org.uk or call 01273 229004 and speak to Mandi. We look forward to hearing from you...



You could help out with events, such as the one shown below (People's Day 2011).



Saving Energy & Money with Brighton and Hove 10:10



Rising fuel prices mean keeping houses warm and comfortable this winter will be less affordable for an increasing number of people. The big six energy companies have all hiked their prices, with gas costing 15% more on average. This mixed with the disconcerting array of tariffs means more households are falling into fuel poverty or unwittingly paying too much for their energy. In response to this, thousands of people across Brighton and Hove are taking the 10:10 challenge – save energy, save money and help reduce our impact on the planet.

10:10 is all about making small simple changes to reduce your energy use – if we all do it, it will make a big difference. Here's a selection of relatively cheap but effective ideas that will help you save energy and money;

Always switch off appliances at the wall - The average microwave oven uses more energy powering its digital clock than it does cooking food! If sockets are in hard to reach places, Standby Saver Starter Kits are available from Nigel's Eco Store: tel: 0800 288 8970 or visit the website: <http://bit.ly/nfRWvj>

Draft bust! Plug gaps around windows, doors, chimneys, floors and the letterbox. Cheap, effective and available from most DIY shops.

Revitalise your radiator - Make sure radiators are regularly bled and try using radiator reflectors - <http://bit.ly/nigelradiator>

Change to low energy bulbs - There are myths about levels of mercury but the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has provided assurances that the new 'Energy Saving Recommended' bulbs are not a danger to the public. This could save £7 worth of electricity per bulb a year and they last longer.

For more information on the products and many more ideas visit Brighton based Nigel's Eco Store <http://www.nigelsecostore.com>

Going further

To see the really big savings Brighton and Hove 10:10 can offer advice and support for people wanting to insulate walls and lofts, or install solar technology. These measures could save hundreds of pounds and may be available at no cost. Here is an example;

Person A - 70 years old, living in detached bungalow built in 1970: is entitled to free draft proofing, cavity wall and loft insulation.

For more information, email: my1010@brightonandhove1010.org.

Are you an active member of the older community or have ideas that could help others at risk of fuel poverty?

Brighton and Hove 10:10 are looking to work with active and experienced pioneers in the community to help reach those who are at risk of fuel poverty and may not be able to take advantage of options available. We'd love to hear from you.

Contact Tom - tel: 01273 878785
Email: tom@brightonandhove1010.org

Age Concern East Sussex Advocacy Service

Stephen Giles, head of Age Concern's local Advocacy Service explains about the important work they carry out helping older people to deal with their problems...

Older people sometimes don't know which way to turn when faced with a problem and, consequently, feel they have lost control of their lives. For example, they may have difficulty in organising their finances or dealing with council and NHS departments, housing associations, care agencies, utility companies and other providers of goods or services.

It may be that they lack the information needed to make informed choices, that they find it difficult to speak up for themselves or that, in extreme cases, they are simply ignored and their views and wishes not taken into account.

The Advocacy Service aims to support and empower older people by enabling them to make informed choices, resolve their problems and have a say about issues affecting their lives.

The service is free and confidential and available to all people aged 60 or over living in Brighton or Hove. Our advocates are mostly volunteers and are all Criminal Records Bureau checked. They are non-judgmental and will not take a view of what is in an older person's best interests or try to persuade them to follow a particular course of action.

If you would like the support of an advocate, or know somebody who would, please telephone 01273 476704 and speak to Michael Townsend on extension 232 or Stephen Giles on extension 231.

Harvest Share free cookery and growing sessions for adults over 50

The Brighton & Hove Food Partnership has been running a free series of 'Harvest Share' workshops with groups of adults aged 50 and over. Participants attend the sessions on Friday mornings for 8 weeks to share their knowledge and experiences of growing and cooking food. Each session includes a chance to cook a dish together as well as hot drinks and snacks. The sessions focus on learning from each other and sharing the knowledge and experience of participants.

The Food Partnership's Cookery team currently deliver the 'Old Spice' cookery workshops for older men, so we have built on the success of their work and the sessions are run by an experienced cookery worker and food grower. At the first session the group are asked for their interests and preferences to help shape the sessions. However topics covered have included:

- Healthy cookery tips
- Sourcing affordable ingredients, budgeting and using up leftovers
- Quick and easy meals, and cooking for one
- Eating seasonally
- World cookery
- Growing herbs and salads in small pots
- Foraging
- A visit to an accessible allotment site, including a cookery session based on what can be picked and cooked on site



Previous participants said it was a 'very helpful, supportive group with an excellent facilitator.' Participants enjoyed 'sharing healthy cooking experiences with others' and 'learning some traditional cooking methods'.

We hope to continue running these sessions in 2012. If you would like to be kept informed or want to find out more please contact Jess Crocker, Harvest Manager at the Brighton & Hove Food Partnership on 01273 431700, or email: harvest@bhfood.org.uk.

