

The Pensioner

Journal of Brighton & Hove Pensioner Action

No. 38, Spring 2011

Pensioner Action to launch soon!

Since a vote in November to dissolve was passed by Pensioners' Forum members, 'Pensioner Action' has formed and is getting to work for the benefit of all older people in the city!

In December, Pensioners' Forum members voted overwhelmingly to allow the organisation to dissolve and a merger with 60+ Action to proceed in what is a large step towards becoming a louder voice for local older people.

Pensioner Action

The merged project, 'Pensioner Action' is now part of a of a larger organisation, Impetus, which works to empower local people; however the outputs and aims of both the Pensioners' Forum and 60+ Action will be maintained, including 'The Pensioner' and the neighbourhood groups.

Launch

The steering group are still deciding finer details about committee appointment and representation, but major decisions around operation have now been made. Details will be given at a launch on Monday 28th February at Patching Lodge (see page 3 for details).

Public Meetings

In addition, bi-monthly public meetings will be held at varying locations, focusing on topical issues. The first of these will be held on Monday 28th March, venue to be confirmed, 10.30 – 12.30pm with a discussion of the Council Budget. All are welcome to attend – please call us on 01273 229004 for venue details. We hope to have a speaker from the Council and you will be able to make your views heard. A further meeting discussing the plans for the GP Consortia will be held on 6th June (venue to be confirmed). We hope you will join us for these events.

An information pack about Pensioner Action is available to those interested. Please get in touch on 01273 229004 for details, to register for event attendance or to provide your valuable feedback on our new organisation.

- *Launch - 28th Feb, Patching Lodge, 11am - 12.30pm*
- *Public meeting - 28th March, venue to be confirmed, 10.30am - 12.30pm, call us for details.*



October Spending Review Summary



60+ Action Group News



Grandparents' legal rights

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Editor's Letter



Happy new year to all our readers! We've been very busy planning the merger of 60+ Action and the Pensioners' Forum, and are pleased to announce that in December our members voted 141 to 9 to allow the Forum to dissolve

and Pensioner Action to form. We plan to launch our new organisation on 28th February at Patching Lodge, 11am to 12.30pm. If you wish to attend, please get in touch. See page 3 for more details on this. We give our thanks to the LifeLines project for helping us secure use of the venue for our launch - their support is really appreciated.

A quick update on Older People's Day: in the past, we ran this event at Hove Town Hall; however, this is now being run by the City Council, and will be held as a combined event for all groups in the city, known as 'People's Day'. A venue is yet to be named, but we understand it will go ahead on 26th March - we hope to be present with a stall and to see you all there!

Write to: Lila Hunnisett, Pensioner Action, 1st Fl., Intergen House, 65 - 67 Western Road, Hove, BN3 2JQ. Tel: 01273 229004 / Email: lila.hunnisett@pf.bh-impetus.org

For more details on People's Day, contact Andy Tyrrell on 01273 290548.

This issue is sponsored by Saga who have recently opened an independent living shop in Hove. See the back page for details. We thank them for helping us to continue to publish the journal; without the support of advertisers and sponsors like Saga we would be very hard pushed to fund *The Pensioner*. Donations are always very welcome - and thank you so much to everybody who included one with their subscription renewals - your support is really appreciated. We raised a substantial amount thanks to your generosity, but we must continue our hard work to fund the magazine - please get in touch if you have any ideas around this.

Remember, if you have any feedback on our features, our new organisation, or would like to get involved in one way or another please let us know. We can work together to make you heard on the things which are important to you.

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Signed _____ Date _____

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Get *The Pensioner* emailed to you for free - call 01273 229004 / email: lila.hunnisett@pf.bh-impetus.org - sign up today!

Older People's Council News

Jack Hazelgrove is Chair of the OPC - an independent body set up and supported by Brighton & Hove City Council. It works in partnership with the Council and other large statutory services to give older people a say in policies and services.



Jack Hazelgrove, OPC

At the Annual General Meeting held on 27th October, the officers to take us through our own postal vote election on June 30th 2011 were elected as follows: Chair – Jack Hazelgrove; Vice-Chair – Francis Tonks; Secretary – John Barry; and Treasurer – Colin Carden. A well attended meeting heard an absorbing talk from the

Director of Public Health, Dr Tom Scanlon. We were told that the government is planning for all older people to have a Health Check Programme by March 2015!

I recently attended a patients' group meeting at Park Crescent Surgery. Although at present there are only two such groups for patients to get together with their GP and the Practice Manager to consult on improvements to the service, it is intended to roll out this provision throughout the city. Do ask your own surgery when they are going to set up such a group – so much better than an impersonal survey!

At our November meeting we had a presentation from Council officers James Hengeveld and Mark Ireland about consultation on the city budget for 2011 – 12. The highest priorities from the survey were – education (76%), refuse collection and street cleansing (71%), waste disposal and recycling (66%) and children's' social care (65%). No surprises there, although older people do not figure as such in the priorities, I think many grandparents would still put children's' welfare ahead of their own concerns.

We also had a presentation by Richard Bell on Foot Care Services for older people, emphasising that 'podiatry' is the specialist service for those with serious foot conditions as opposed to 'chiroprody' and toenail cutting or basic foot care. The latter is available at Age Concern (just off the Seven Dials), thus avoiding the need for an expensive private appointment. Mobility for older people is so important and we were impressed by the work of Richard Bell's team.

On the same topic of staying mobile, Community Transport provides a valuable service for older people unable to use the buses or who want an escorted day at the supermarket and Ed Bassford, General Manager, updated us at our December meeting.

Finally, we are pleased that City Clean responded to our request for an extra seat at the Old Steine - the new seat is installed by the Lewes Rd northbound bus stops. Do let me know if you have a similar request and I will pass it on. May I wish all our readers a Happy New Year in 2011.
Jack Hazelgrove.

www.olderpeoplescouncil.org / tel: 01273 296427 / email: olderpeoplescouncil@brighton-hove.gov.uk

❖ Remember to register to vote in the Older People's Council elections in June...

❖ More women are needed to stand for election to the OPC. Make yourself heard!

Call 01273 296427 for details

Launch of Pensioner Action

If you would like to attend the launch of our new organisation, Pensioner Action, please call us on 01273 229004 to book a place. Date: Monday 28th February at Patching Lodge, Eastern Road, Brighton, 11am - 12.30pm.

We hope to have representatives of Pensioner Action, the PCT and other older people's organisations present. A question and answer session will follow an introduction to our work and aims, and tea, coffee and biscuits will be served. Join us and get involved!

Public meetings:

The first of our bi-monthly public meetings will be held on 28th March, 10.30 - 12.30, with a discussion about the Council Budget Venue yet to be confirmed but will be announced soon - call 01273 229004. All are welcome.

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...

City Council elections are held in early May - remember to register to vote and raise any of your issues with the candidates!

The Comprehensive Spending Review, October 2010

Samantha Bond of Age Concern Brighton, Hove & Portslade assesses the impact of the recent CSR on older people.

A report published days before October's Spending Review suggests that 70% of people over 65 believed they would be the age group most affected. Older people have fewer opportunities to increase their income and may be more vulnerable to cuts in benefits and services due to frailty and/or long term health conditions. They also tend to spend a higher proportion of their income on food and fuel. Worryingly, 31% of older people surveyed said they would consider cutting back on food if their household income is affected, and over a third said they would consider cutting down on heating.

Benefits/Pensions

Thankfully, universal benefits including Winter Fuel Payments, Cold Weather Payments, eye tests, bus passes and TV licences have been retained.

The State Pension will rise in line with wages or inflation or 2.5%, whichever is highest. The State Pension age will be raised to 66 for everyone by 2020. Older people can work later into life but this may impact on caring roles with relatives or minding grandchildren.

While the State Pension is to rise, the maximum Pension Savings Credit Award has been frozen for four years. This will most affect older people with savings of less than £20,000, about one in six of those receiving pensions, around 1.8m households. Local Housing Allowance will be capped and private

tenants may have to make up the shortfall between their Housing Benefit and their rent. As market rents are high in Brighton and Hove, tenants on low incomes are likely to be greatly affected.

Services

Total health spending each year is to rise by 0.4%. This is low in comparison with average yearly increases of over 3% since 1948 and nearly 7% since 2000. On top of this, £20bn NHS efficiency savings have to be made. On the plus side, Dementia research is to be prioritised and access to psychological therapies is to be expanded for older people.

There is to be £1bn additional funding for social care and £1bn from the NHS for joint working with local authorities "so that elderly people do not continue to fall through the crack between two systems".

The Supporting People programme which provides homelessness prevention to vulnerable people including some older people will see a gradual reduction in funding. Alongside this are concerns about how councils will spend reduced budgets. Although the review promised a bigger role for charities and a fund for charities experiencing financial difficulties, the knock on effect of cuts to local authorities may be cuts to charities providing services to local people. The effects of such cuts on older people remain to be seen.

Our message here is – be vigilant. If you notice any marked reduction in services provided, let us know. Pensioner Action will investigate and publicise these issues.



Post-code lottery

For years we have been trying to reduce the post-code lottery – with services available in one locality, refused in a neighbouring one. But now it seems to be reinforced by the Coalition Government.

The government now promotes localism; decisions are to be made by local bodies – local councils, PCT's etc. – in light of their own priorities. Complementing this is the removal of much ring-fencing of funding; it is argued that this will encourage inter-department collaboration in spending; but it will also allow councils to move funding away from previously prioritised areas (however local authorities still have a statutory duty to provide a range of services). Again the government is removing from its Equalities Bill the clause requiring councils to assess the effect of its policies on different

categories of people – the poorer, for example.

One of the essential themes of "The Big Society" is that we should all become more involved. We should be looking out for innovative solutions which could be replicated elsewhere; but we must also be vigilant in ensuring that vulnerable people are not experiencing discrimination.

The Pensioner would like to hear about good, and bad, practice which can be discussed in its pages.

BN1
BN2
BN41

60+ Action Group News

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



Udita Everett leads singing sessions for 60+ Action

Since last update, it's been a busy time at 60+ Action - in the absence of a permanent group worker, Lila has continued to run the groups, and it is hoped a dynamic, experienced person will be employed very soon.

In November, groups were visited by Udita Everett who led Breathe Easy Singing sessions (see below for her Singing Group details) to encourage members to improve their health through this enjoyable activity. At one group, Tony Hill kindly volunteered to accompany with his piano! The sessions were followed by festive nibbles in the run up to the seasonal period.

January saw some great speakers including Claire Stevens, from Brighton and Hove LINK (Local Involvement Network), a powerful independent watchdog for health and social care services in the area. Really good debate was had around the wastage of NHS medicines (a current campaign) and other health-related issues. See the article on p13 for more information.

Chris Barfield of Money Advice & Community Services also gave talks; they offer services around benefits advice, money handling and debt management, including a cash delivery service for those who find it hard reach the bank. An astonishing £5 billion a year goes unclaimed in benefits by older people - the equivalent of around £500 per person! It really is worth checking you get all you are entitled to. Services are free for those on low incomes, but a paid-for option is also available. For more details, call 01273 664016.

The Kemp Town/St James/Hanover group recently moved from Courtney King House to Patching Lodge, Eastern Road, a lovely venue which is bright and welcoming. We've been very pleased to see new faces at recent groups and hope you will join for upcoming sessions. Come and get involved - learn, meet new people, solve your local issues and join in - you are most welcome!

Therapeutic Singing Group for people with breathing difficulties

Mondays: 1.45 to 3.15 at Patching Lodge, Eastern Rd, Brighton.
Fridays: 11.30 to 1pm at Ralli Hall, Denmark Villas, Hove. For info, call Udita Everett - 01273 556755.



What is 60+ Action?

60+ Action works 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.

60+ Action Diary - join in!

Craven Vale Group. Craven Vale Resource Centre, Queensway, Craven Vale • 2pm-4pm. Feb 23rd, March 30th, April 27th, May 25th •

Kemp Town/St James/Hanover Group. Patching Lodge, Eastern Road • 2.30 - 4pm. 8th March & 10th May •

West Hove Group. Muriel House, Ingram Crescent West, Portland Road, Hove. • 2.30 to 4pm. March 15th & May 17th •

Moulsecoomb Group. The Orchards, Moulsecoomb Way, Moulsecoomb. • 2.30 - 4pm. 1st March & 3rd May •

Call 01273 229004 for details

Financial Advice Session

60+ member Clive Taplin has recently been in touch with Chartered Financial Advisor Faye Church of Towry Ltd, who has kindly offered to visit groups independently and free-of-charge to discuss common-sense issues surrounding money and investments, and answering questions if members are interested. This may help those living on life savings supporting state pensions. Please contact us on 01273 229004 if you would be interested. Please note Towry Ltd are a private firm and any members wishing to take up services after the free session would have to take into account their fees.

Letters

Send letters to: Lila Hunnisett, The Pensioners' Forum, 1st Floor, InterGen House, 65-67 Western Road, Hove, BN3 2JQ. Unfortunately we can't print them all & some may be edited, but we really want your opinions!

Dignity in Dying

I couldn't agree more with Hans Lobstein's thoughts on dignity in dying (Letters, *The Pensioner*, Summer 2010). Living Well, Dying Well, a local not-for-profit, was formed last year in response to just these concerns.

Even though we have seen an increasing number and range of health professionals involved in giving support at the end of life, it doesn't appear to have resulted in an improvement in people's perception or experience of a 'good death'.

Perhaps we all need to acknowledge that primarily death is a normal, natural and hugely profound life event. In a compassionate society, access to good medical care and symptom control is essential - but we also need to guard against death becoming over-medicalised and interventionist. As individuals, if we hand over responsibility completely, we become less and less confident in our ability to face death, or to support our loved ones. Consequently we become 'de-skilled' as human beings.

For most people the desire to die at home springs from a wish to remain in familiar surroundings, among family, friends and our social circle, while maintaining some

degree of self-determination over what happens. For anyone who has been involved in supporting a relative, friend or neighbour at the end of their life in environment of their choosing – usually one that brings a sense of peace – it can be one of the most rewarding and fulfilling experiences we are ever likely to have.

Unfortunately not all families have the confidence or know-how to be able to support this wish. Over the next year in East Sussex we will be training the first group of lay people to act as 'doulas' for the dying (supporters/companions). Their role is to 'walk alongside' the person who is dying and their family, being present as an 'expert family member' giving practical, emotional and spiritual support where needed, so that the dignified death that so many of us hope for, in time becomes the norm.

Living Well, Dying Well and many others are working very mindfully to influence and create change. To get in touch, or undertake a survey around these issues, email: hae@livingwelldyingwell.net or call 01273 479114. *Hermione Elliott, Director, Living Well, Dying Well.*

Editor: This is clearly an issue worthy of careful consideration to ensure the needs of those affected are met with sensitivity.

CAN WE HELP YOU?

We are an Association which gives grants to people living in Hove or Portslade only, who might need some help financially in circumstances of need brought about by illness or disability of some kind and which is not covered by the Statutory Authorities. There is no age restriction - we make grants for infants, children, and adults of any age. The only requirement is that there has to be a reason for need because of ill health or disability.

If you are someone, or know of someone, who could benefit from us, please write giving name, address and phone number and brief reasons for your request to:

The Secretary, Hove and Portslade Aid In Sickness Association, The Parish Office, Wilbury Road, Hove, BN3 3PB.

Audrey Thomas

Out and about Adventurous pensioners, seeking free bus journeys, should be made aware that the Stagecoach bus company has made marked improvements to the No. 17 bus timetable, possibly as a result of comments I made at a "Bus Surgery" in Churchill Square, a few months ago. The 0830 departure from Churchill Square to Horsham, on Mondays to Saturdays, has been replaced by departures at 0800 and 0900. On Saturdays, this makes connections at Horsham possible for arrivals at the following destinations: Guildford 1110; Dorking 1042; Gatwick Airport 1011; Crawley 1005; Redhill (via Gatwick Airport) 1111. On Mondays to Fridays, these destinations can be reached an hour later. A useful website for establishing connections in this respect is: www.traveline.info. *Michael Kohn*



Sheltered housing staffing reductions

I live in a sheltered housing scheme where the on-site scheme manager has been withdrawn and replaced by visiting staff. Living below me is a very frail lady with dementia; and there are other similarly vulnerable people living in the scheme. I am concerned that these people will not receive the level of support that they need. Is this the way that sheltered housing is moving?

Sonia Rawlings, Hove

Peter Lloyd comments: "A number of sheltered housing managements (but not Brighton and Hove City Council) are changing from on-site managers to forms of 'floating' support where teams of staff, each with specific roles, make infrequent visits to the schemes. Many of the frail residents rely heavily on a scheme manager for practical emergency and emotional support. Any change in mode of management should ensure that support packages are secure and monitored and that a good quality of life is maintained. Residents should have an Association to articulate and safeguard their interests. Write to The Pensioner if you are experiencing any loss of service – and if you encounter any ways of maintaining a good service."

Clean Up!

Not long ago, I had a letter passed on to me from the Mayor's Office. It was from an elderly man who complained at the high cost of dry cleaning and wanted to know if it was possible to get a discount. I wrote to the Argus outlining the problem, and shortly afterwards there was a response from the Regional Manager of Johnson/Sketchley Dry Cleaners who said they offer a 10% discount to senior citizens on standard textile items such as suits, skirts, jackets etc. He pointed out you should tell the assistant when you drop off your clothing that you are asking for a discount and you may be required to provide proof of your identity. This is a really good offer.

If you know of any good discounts available that others might like to hear of, please let us know! Tel: 01273 229004.

Francis Tonks enlightens us on some special deals for local older people...

Infinity Foods in North Road, Brighton, also has a good 10% discount system and the shop sells good and healthy foodstuffs. It is vegetarian and runs as a co-operative.

Some cinemas offer special terms for pensioners, and the Duke of York's does a deal on Tuesdays. For £3.50 before 5 o'clock you get cinema entrance as well as tea or coffee and biscuits. I believe we should be told of any concessions for pensioners and we could publicise the kind-hearted enterprises that give us their support. I suggest you write to 'The Pensioner' with any further information. To quote one retailer: "every little helps".

A home for life: Where should we live in our later years?

This was the title of a recent conference hosted in London – by a local publishing company, Pavilion, which produces an impressive list of journals, handbooks, etc. in the field of health and social care.

The themes discussed were ones that concern all:

- We live in an ageing society: in the next 20 years the number of over 80's will double; one in four children born now will reach 100 years!
- What is a home? A familiar place where we feel at ease.
- 'Older people' is a very diverse category – we differ in wealth, levels of frailty, gender, ethnicity...we need, therefore, a wide range of housing solutions.
- With cuts in public spending on services, we must find ways of generating more services for less (or no) cost.
- One solution mooted was the development of sheltered housing schemes as centres of services and activities for older people. Much more can be done to publicise these projects – so that they become the norm rather than the exception.
- We should spend more (not less) on preventative care, so that high-costing acute care is minimised.

The conference highlighted many of the issues prominent in our own council's Housing Strategy for Older People.

For more information about Pavilion's publications, visit www.pavpub.com / For more information about sheltered/retirement housing, visit www.shelteredhousing.org

Retired? A great time to Stop Smoking



- Older smokers often say they'll stop smoking when they retire. They're only smoking because their job is boring or stressful.
- Pensions don't go very far and packing in smoking can save you a packet.

Good News

- If you are thinking about quitting and have retired you can get all your patches and pills free from your local stop smoking service.

We help thousands of smokers, young and old, to quit every year.

So call your local NHS stop smoking specialists today on 01273 267397 or visit www.smokefreeeastsussex.org.uk


SMOKEFREE

Sussex Community 
NHS Trust

Overcoming Loneliness

Facing old age alone without the comfort of family can bring loneliness. This can develop into depression which in turn lowers the immune system and doctors have linked it to back pain, heart disease, diabetes, cancer and of course suicide. Here are a few simple tips to help ward off loneliness:

We must **acknowledge** that we may not always be able to take care of ourselves, and should plan where we will be content to live. Visit sheltered housing schemes and care homes in your preferred area. Note how happy the residents appear to be. Are the staff caring, what activities are there, what help is at hand, is there a nice garden to sit in, what are the rooms like and what of the views? You may find they vary from awful to awesome, but make a list and keep it updated.

Keep busy. Write letters, take up a hobby or start collecting things of interest. Be aware of and interested in everything around you. Is there a community association in your area? Join it or maybe start one. The University of the Third Age runs a fascinating range of interest groups, find out from your local library. You will be a welcome member of our 60+ Action Group.

Help others to help yourself. Be a carer for our wonderful Neighbourhood Care Scheme. There are many members, probably in your area, who would welcome a regular visit from you, if only for a chat and some company. Offer some time to a charity you would like to help.

Avoid escape routes. Don't sleep too much or spend hours sitting in a chair watching TV. Don't daydream. Make plans and strive to bring them about. Exercise is vital. Go for a brisk 20 minute walk every day, health and weather permitting, otherwise devise some gentle exercise at home.

Strive to be happy even though it takes an effort of will. Unhappiness will not improve your situation, it will just make it worse. Talk to friends, a counsellor or maybe a vicar, and keep talking until you find you can hold an

attitude of optimism. Focus on the joy and beauty in the living world around you, not the doom and gloom.

Positive thoughts. Collect good thoughts of inspiration, meaningful poems, read good books. Share these things with people you meet and others will seek your companionship.

Join a social group in, or close to your community. Find out about friendship mornings, lunch clubs and such like. You will get to hear about other social gatherings. Commit yourself to attending regularly. A little love in later life could prove a wonderfully rejuvenating thing. Explore websites for 'Dating Seniors' or the introductions section in local papers. Frequent opportunities for friendship and company exist there. Don't be bashful!

Go to church or other places of spiritual sustenance. You don't have to be religious. Such places are frequented by many friendly and caring people, but first you need to allow them into your life.

P.S. I myself have no relatives and have been alone for over twenty years. I often feel the need for someone special in my life, but that is a sense of aloneness, and not quite the same as loneliness. I have many chums and always try to make friends with people younger than myself. They tend not to pop off so quickly! I find many of the above suggestions work for me. I hope they will for you too. A very happy new year and a long and satisfying third age to you all. Clive Taplin.



Members activity at a recent 60+ Action group - join us!

Feeling insecure? Telecare can help

As we grow older, our faculties deteriorate; poorer vision, loss of hearing, impaired balance. Fortunately there are scores of gadgets and aids which can help to resolve such problems. But one of the greatest threats to our continued independence, being able to live alone, is the feeling of insecurity: what will happen if we fall, experience a blackout or feel sick?

Today there is a large range of electronic devices which can help, embraced by the term 'Telecare'. Locally, these are provided by CareLink Plus, based in Patching Lodge. Most of us are aware of the pendant alarm: in an emergency you press the button and a call goes through to CareLink Plus. But there is also a gadget, attached to the waist, which raises the alarm if you fall unconscious and unable to press the button. Again, there is the voice alarm, activated if you are conscious but cannot activate the pendant.

Other services monitor activity – is one up and about? A pad under the mattress will raise an alarm if you get up in the night and do not return to bed in a specified time. A pressure pad will detect movement into the bathroom or kitchen to ensure that you are alive and well. Wandering and confusion can be detected by an alarm which is activated if the front door is opened.

CareLink Plus holds data on all customers giving details of help available, health and care needs, etc. When it receives an alarm call, it will try to contact you in person – by telephone or through the fitted voice box. If this is not possible, it will alert a nearby carer, send one of its own staff or summon an ambulance or fire engine – whichever seems the most appropriate action.

CareLink Plus is one of the best local authority providers of Telecare; it won a prestigious Public Service Award in 2010. The cost is modest – and well worth the peace of mind that it gives. A pendant alarm system now costs from £14 per month. Every installation is tailor-made – to fit your own needs and lifestyle.

If you think that Telecare can help you in any way, visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/carelinkplus - or call 01273 673105. A staff member will visit you at home to discuss possible options.

The Journal of Assistive Technologies, published by Pier Professional contains articles on how people actually use Telecare. Visit www.pierprofessional.com / tel: 01273 783720 / email: info@pierprofessional.com

After divorce - what about the grandparents and grandchildren?

Peter Lloyd, with the help of solicitor Katherine Gage, examines the legal situation applicable to grandparents seeking to maintain contact with their grandchildren when families separate.

The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is special and unique. In our own society the indulgence of grandparents is seen to balance the strictness of parents. In the past, the three generation household was common; now parents and children prefer to live independently. But, today, with most mothers out at work, the support provided by grandparents is highly valued.

But we also have, today, a much higher divorce rate – up to a third of marriages are so ended. For a variety of reasons, the ‘absent’ parent accepts a loss of contact with their children. But these children may have close bonds with grandparents who may continue to live close by. Such a situation may take a myriad of forms.

One would wish that the divorcing parents arrange to separate amicably – they agree on their children’s residence, the costs of their upbringing, and contact arrangements. One assumes that this will include grandparents, and aunts, uncles and cousins.

If such proves impossible, one should first try mediation. The mediator will encourage each party to express their own wishes, and will try to help them to reach compromises which satisfy all parties. The mediator cannot enforce a solution. If the parties still cannot agree one is left only with legal action through the courts.

In mid-2009, a research report entitled ‘*Beyond the Nuclear*’ urged the government to review the legal position of grandparents – which it is believed to be doing.

Family issues are usually very complex and diverse, and often acrimonious. The courts, in such cases, tend to act pragmatically rather than follow simple rules. One is advised to seek the help of a solicitor who specialises in such cases.

To start the legal process, the grandparents must obtain leave to file an application; this is usually granted. Immediately before the first court hearing, an officer of CAFCASS (Children and Family Court Advisory Support Services) will interview all parties in order to provide the judge with the basic issues involved; this may also help the parties to come to an amicable solution.

At the first court hearing the judge will hear the representations by, or on behalf, of all parties involved.

This too may prod them into reaching their own solution. But if it does not, the judge will ask for further enquiries to be made, evidence presented. CAFCASS may then interview the children, school teachers, social workers and others to produce an independent report with recommendations.

At the second hearing, the report will be presented to the judge, who will in most cases, if the parties agree, make an Order in line with the recommendations. Some of the evidence may be contested, or new evidence produced which will lead into further enquiry. A Final Hearing will be fixed. The parties have to bear in mind that recommendations set out in a CAFCASS report will carry great weight and are likely to form the basis of any Final Order.

The court process is likely to be lengthy, and costly – the likelihood of legal aid being much reduced. The decision of the court may not always satisfy all parties; and if the person with parental responsibility for the child is not in agreement, further difficulties are likely to result. However, the courts do seek to find an acceptable solution. At all times, the present and future welfare of the child is paramount. For potentially vulnerable children, the relationship with their grandparents may be a vital lifeline.

- **Most firms of solicitors will have a member with expertise in family cases.**
- **For mediation, contact The Family Mediators Association - see www.thefma.co.uk, or contact Family Mediation in Sussex - tel: 01273 694661 / visit www.fmistd.co.uk**
- **Support may be found with the Grandparents Association: tel: 0845 4349585 / visit www.grandparents-association.org.uk**

We are grateful to Katherine Gage, Solicitor to Adams and Remers LLP, Lewes for advice on the legal process described here.
If you are interested in a discussion on these issues, please contact us on 01273 229004.

The Pensioner?

A new title for our journal?

What do you think of the title ‘*The Pensioner*’? Some readers claim to find it offputting. But remember, *The Pensioner* is produced by older people, for older people, however defined! So let us know your thoughts and if an appropriate new title reflecting our aims is suggested, a small prize will be awarded to the person whose idea we adopt - see p2 for our address.



The Daily Living Centre

The Daily Living Centre, run by the City Council, is now located in Montague House, in Montague St, Kemp Town (opposite Brighton College and the Gala Bingo Hall).

The Centre provides detailed, impartial information and advice about a wide range of daily living equipment that enables people to lead more independent lives. There is an extensive range including some of the latest products for adults and children and can be tried out by appointment with the occupational therapist. There is also a drop-in day every Wednesday between 10am and 4pm.

The DLC is not a shop and does not sell or hire out equipment, so there's never any pressure to buy. The objective is to help you identify the most appropriate product for your needs, so that you can make the right decision when you're ready. The staff can also advise you on the best way to obtain equipment, be it through health, social services, purchasing from reputable suppliers or directly from manufacturers by mail or the internet.

Examples of equipment on display include:

- **Chairs that are easy to rise from**
- **Stair lifts**
- **Easy access baths and showers**
- **For the kitchen – a fork that acts as a knife and microwave ovens that talk**
- **Telephones for the hard of hearing or poorly-sighted**
- **Telecare equipment**
- **Walking frames and much more...**

Explore the services offered by this centre - drop in on a Wednesday or telephone for an appointment to discuss your particular needs.

Tel: 01273 296132 / email: dlc@brighton-hove.gov.uk / or visit the website: www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/dailylivingcentre.



Black and Minority Ethnic Community Partnership

The Partnership (BMECP) now has new premises. Developed within one of the new blocks within the New England area, behind Brighton Station, it was opened for use in April 2010 – after ten years of planning and assembly of funding.

The spacious suite includes two large meeting rooms (approx 100 people) and several smaller rooms; all of these may be hired by other organisations at most reasonable rates.

Ongoing activities specifically for older people include a weekly lunch club and exercise classes. The centre serves as an advice centre on a wide range of issues – housing, money, legal etc; noteworthy is the provision of advice to refugee and asylum seekers.

The Centre is open on weekdays during normal working hours (and at other times, for meetings etc, by arrangement). The new centre is a great asset to our city; so make use of its facilities; tell your friends about it.

BMECP, 10a Fleet St,
Brighton, BN1 4ZE. Tel:
0300 303 1171 / email:
resourcecentre@bmeccp.org.
uk web: www.bmeccp.org.uk



Information Prescription

Information Prescription is a new service giving access to a wealth of information for everyone in the following areas:

- **Health** – information on conditions such as asthma, cancer and diabetes, vaccination programmes, medications and more.
- **Health and Social Care Services** – hospitals, GP surgeries, finding a dentist etc.
- **Advice for carers** – for those supporting others with health and social care needs.
- **Support groups, voluntary organisations & charities** – details of groups such as the Samaritans, organisations offering learning difficulties support, Brighton Women's Centre, counselling, etc.
- **Housing** – information and advice on council housing, repairs, adaptations and homelessness.
- **Financial advice & benefits** – what to do to obtain advice and benefit support.
- **Education & training** - courses, training, qualifications, grants, support etc.
- **Healthy living, social and leisure** – stop smoking services, healthy eating, substance misuse, community leisure etc.
- **Transport** – local information including transport advice for those with particular needs
- **Crisis support** – how to access health and social care services in an emergency.

You can get your information by either visiting your local library where staff will help you, visiting the website at www.ipbh.org.uk or calling an Information Prescriptions advisor on 0800 0130351.

Dementia events NHS Brighton and Hove are holding events every other month entitled 'Living with Dementia' For info and to book please visit <http://www.brightonandhove.nhs.uk> or contact Emily Watts on 01273 295490.

The Derek & Eileen Dodgson Foundation helps people in need aged over 55, who live in East and West Sussex, with preference for connections with Brighton and Hove. The trust assists with mainly one-off grants that are needed for respite care, white goods, bedding and re-housing costs. If you know of someone who might need some help, contact them: Derek & Eileen Dodgson Foundation, 8 Locks Hill, Portslade, Brighton, BN41 2LB, 01273 419802 or email: ianw.dodd@ntlworld.com

Want *The Pensioner* posted to you?

Subscribe for only £3 per year. See inside front cover for details!



Silver Surfers

Brighton and Hove libraries offer free taster sessions and one-to-one tuition with a member of library staff or volunteer and usually last between 30 minutes and one hour. You will be guided through the basic skills of using the internet and sending emails, giving you the knowledge and understanding to continue using your computing skills at home or at the library when using our library computers.

Sessions will:

- **introduce you to surfing the Web**
- **help you to set up an email account so you can keep up with friends and relatives overseas**
- **help you research and source information for your interests and hobbies**

The sessions are tailored to each individual customer and are intended for those new to computers. To book a session contact one of the libraries above right:

Are you over 50 and would like to learn more about the internet and email?

Angleton - 01273 296904 / Hollingbury 01273 296908 / Hove - 01273 296937 / Jubilee - 01273 296961 / Patcham - 01273 296912 / Portslade - 01273 296914 / Rottingdean - 01273 296918 / Saltdean - 01273 296920

Computers are available free for everyone to use at all City Libraries for up to one hour per day. A library card enables you to access the online resources including Which? online and the Oxford Reference Library.

Photo by Quark67 Reproduced under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic license.



The Trust for Developing Communities

Community action has, for long, been lauded; neighbours getting together to plan and create something which they think their locality needs. (Such activity is very different from the projects of big voluntary organisations which recruit volunteers to promote services).

Much community action is spontaneous, but it can be greatly facilitated by a development worker who provides advice and support. An excellent example of a local organisation which provides such facilitation is the Trust for Developing Communities (Chief Executive Barry Hulyer). With an annual budget of nearly £ ½ million (much of it grants from the local City Council), it employs over a dozen community development workers supporting projects in various locations within the city.

Most projects try to involve all members of a community, for example, both young and old. Projects include the creation of a leisure centre, a children's playground or environmental features.

Two projects are specifically directed to older people – both are based in extra-care sheltered housing, New Larchwood in Coldean and Downlands Court in Peacehaven (Lewes District in East Sussex). In both schemes, a community participation worker (Steve Andrews and Sue Sayers respectively) stimulates activities among the scheme residents which also involve older people in the locality. The schemes thus become a hub of activity involving older people among their many activities. Thus, New Larchwood now has a community café, Downlands has a library loan box and a weekly IT club.

To find out more about the Trust For Developing Communities, based in Wavertree House, Somerhill Road, Hove, tel: 01273 262 220 or visit www.trustdevcom.org.uk



Access Point Outreach Service

Advice, information & assessment for social care

For residents of Brighton & Hove looking to access advice and support from Adult Social Care, the route was through Access Point, the successful phone assessment service since May 2008. Great news then that they have recently embarked on an outreach service and this pilot scheme offers residents the opportunity to attend sessions around the city for face-to-face contact and on-the-spot assessments.

Working in partnership with local organisations, Age Concern, Federation of the Disabled, and the Carers Centre, Access Point Outreach is able to offer complimentary advice and assessments for residents who prefer the personal touch or just hate using the phone!

Outreach sessions are currently available on a regular basis at venues in Kemptown, Seven Dials, Hove, Saltdean, and Hangleton, with further sessions being added all the time.

Schedule of Access Point Outreach Sessions: Drop-in and By Appointment:

- Age Concern, 29-31 Prestonville Road, Brighton - (01273 720 603) - every other Weds 10am - noon
- St George's Crypt, Kemptown - every Tues 2-4pm
- St Martin's, Longridge Ave, Saltdean - every first Tuesday 10am - noon
- Federation of Disabled People office, Hove (01273 203016) - every 2nd and 4th Monday 2-4pm For disabled and their carers only. Call 01273 203016.
- Hove Polyclinic, Hangleton Every last Tuesday 10am - noon
- Daily Living Centre, Montague Place Kemptown (01273 296132) Every Weds on alternate mornings or afternoons - 10am - noon or 2pm - 4pm

For further information, please phone the Access Point on 01273 295555 or 01273 296150 for appointments, e-mail: AccessPoint@Brighton-hove.gov.uk. Alternatively you can visit the website: www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/access



breeze up

to Devil's Dyke on the 77 bus - **new improved service to run Saturdays and Sundays all year round!**

Or Breeze up to Stanmer Park (78 bus) or Ditchling Beacon (79 bus) - **any Sunday.**

For times, fares and copies of the three route guides (not just bus times - they're full of ideas for what to do too!):

Phone **01273 292480**

Visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/breezebuses

Or visit www.traveline.info to plan any bus or train journey - **anywhere!**

**Free Travel
with a Bus
Pass!**

Take your medicine!

Brighton & Hove Local Involvement Network (LINK) has issued their report on medicine wastage which calls on GPs, health professionals and the public to work together to cut medicine wastage. Wastage costs the NHS £300 million each year, which could be used to fund other health services.

The LINK urges patients who take medicine to:

- Only order what you need
- Arrange a discussion with your pharmacist about your medicine (Medicine Check Up) free and about 20 minutes
- Check what you have at home before re-ordering more medicine
- If you have stopped taking your medicine, let your GP know
- If you go into hospital, remember to take all your medicine with you
- Always take medicine back to a pharmacy for safe disposal

The LINK gives local residents the chance to have their say on how services should be run. If you have any experiences/suggestions on local health and adult social care services that you would like to share or would like a copy of our handy tips fact sheet to remember to take your medicine call 01273 810 235 / email: info@bhlink.org / or visit: www.bhlink.org



RSCH plans

A planning application for the redevelopment of the Royal Sussex County Hospital (RSCH) will be submitted in March 2011. The planning decision will be made by the City Council in July 2011. If it is accepted, work will begin in December 2011. The main aims of the redevelopment are as follows:

- Replacement of the 180 year old Barry and Jubilee buildings
- The moving of the Regional Centre for Neurosciences from Hayward's Heat to Brighton
- Expand the Sussex Cancer Centre
- Become a Major Trauma Centre for Sussex and the South East
- As a University Teaching Hospital, strengthen teaching, training and research.

Make yourself heard if you feel these plans will affect you! To find out more, call 01273 523375 or email: hospital.redevelopment@bsuh.nhs.uk

Reflexology - a science and an art

The practice of Reflexology can be identified as far back as 2,330 B.C.; wall paintings in an Egyptian tomb of Ankhmabor at Saqqara, known as the 'Physicians Tomb' depict figures in a line practicing on one another's feet and hands (see image below).

A definition of modern reflexology is that it is both a science and an art; it deals with the principal that there are reflex points in the feet and hands which correspond to glands, organs and all parts of the body. When these are reflexed with light pressure, it can revitalise the body by enabling the natural internal healing mechanisms to carry out their own repair/rebuilding. It is rather like 'happy hour' for the feet or hands, a nurturing time.

As we age, the immune system deteriorates and makes us more susceptible to disease. 'Dis-ease', strictly speaking, is a disruption of the life process; an interruption of natural bodily functions. Reflexology is a natural way for senior citizens to help relieve aches and pains. Part of the wisdom of age can be the knowledge of remedies for staying healthy. A treatment is very relaxing. When relaxed we are able to feel more self confident.

Benefits of reflexology can include helping to cleanse the body of toxins; it can also help improve circulation, reduce stress and promote well being while bringing a balance to the bodily systems. Reflexology has to be a light touch with seniors - a gentle rotating of toes and fingers with a little pull can help with some conditions; reflexology ought to be experienced first with a qualified practitioner to fully understand the wide range of physical/emotional improvements which can be associated with the treatment; each individual will experience effects unique to their own metabolism. *Diana Ward Davis.*



Egyptian wall paintings from the Physicians Tomb

The Neighbourhood Care Scheme



(NCS) is a good neighbour scheme that supports older people, adults with physical disabilities and their carers by recruiting local volunteers to help them in a variety of ways from simple social visits and help with getting out of the house to assistance with paperwork and odd jobs. The scheme aims to create positive and supportive connections between neighbours. We currently operate in ten neighbourhoods of Brighton & Hove:

Queens Park / Hanover / Coombe Road / North Laine / Hangleton and Knoll / Poets Corner & Vallance North Portslade / Regency / Patcham & Hollingbury / Whitehawk, Manor Farm / Bristol Estate

One member of the scheme said: *"It's something to look forward to. It's lovely to have some one to talk to and have a laugh with."* And there are benefits to the volunteers as well, as one pointed out: *"I generally enjoy the company, but also (as always!) the knowledge that one is useful/ helpful to someone makes one feel good"*.

If you know someone who could do with some neighbourly support, or would like some support yourself, or would be interested in volunteering, please contact us: tel: 01273 775888 / e-mail: info@ncs.bh-impetus.org or at NCS, 1st Fl, Intergen House, 65-67 Western Road, Hove BN3 2JQ. You can find out more by visiting the website: www.bh-impetus.org. Sean de Podesta, Project Leader.

Snooping?

When does keeping an eye on one's neighbour become an invasion of their right to privacy? The boundary is delicate. But recently the members of the Sheltered Housing Action Group (BHCC tenants) resolved unanimously that they should inform their scheme manager of their concerns; after all, one of the prime duties of a scheme manager is to monitor the well-being of their residents.

Whilst the number of vulnerable older people is increasing, the public funding available to support them is static, or falling.

We must all, surely, play a greater part in looking after each other.



The Bluebird Society for the Disabled

Harry Steer is Chairman of the Bluebird Society. He tells us a little about the important role of this organisation in our city - and invites us to get involved!

The Society was founded over forty years ago by the late Ronnie Ablett MBE and serves mainly Hove, Portslade and Adur. Our aim is to provide transport, clubs, theatre visits days out etc for the mobility impaired and older disabled. We endeavour to improve the quality of life of our members by offering a chance to get out and about and to gather socially for those who might otherwise be confined indoors. To this end we run six people carriers fully fitted out for wheelchair access, and we also take people to hospital, dental and doctor appointments at very moderate rates.

We have well over a hundred members who pay an annual subscription of £10, and for that they get a choice of three different clubs running on Sundays, Thursdays and Mondays, with activities such as Bingo, cards etc.

Tea and biscuits are provided, and in the case of the Sunday Club, a hot meal at a very reasonable rate. To maintain the services we offer, we have a shop at 176 Portland Road, well worth a visit! We are delighted to accept donations of books, bric-a-brac, clothes etc in reasonable condition and our prices are cheap. The Society is run by volunteers who give freely of their time and expertise, and they include drivers, shop workers, helpers, club managers and office workers. We can always be contacted weekday mornings at 176 Portland Road, tel 207664, and if you know of anyone locally who would be glad of our services, please put them in touch with us. Alternatively, we are always on the lookout for volunteers, in any of the above categories, who would be most welcome. We run entirely on our own efforts, without any outside funding.

From policy to operational management

The Pensioners' Association meeting on 11th January was addressed by Paul Martin who spent many years with the City Council facilitating the work of older people's organisations – including the OPC and Pensioners' Forum. Their success has benefitted greatly from his support.

Two years ago Paul transferred to a more operational role and in his talk he reflected upon the change. He spoke of the development of personal budgets (recipients are given funds to purchase the services they most value), the attempts to avoid hospitalisation by supporting people in their home, and of the need to plan hospital discharge well in advance of the event. All of these involve intricate processes, many carried out in haste. One may have little time to explore the wider contexts.

Paul then raised some of the issues that determine the relationship between the individual and the state – the individuals' responsibility for one's wellbeing, one's expectations of the role of the state, the choice and control that one might exercise.

Paul's talk generated a lively discussion among those present.

The Pensioners' Association meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 11am in Patching Lodge, Eastern Road.

Upcoming meetings: Tuesday March 8, 2011:
Andy Winter on the Brighton Housing Trust

For more information, contact Chair Isla Robertson on 01273 721655

The Old, Old Story by Len Goldman

Although I'm no longer a sprightly young lad,
I refuse to feel gloomy or grouchy or sad;
I'm a bit hard of hearing and I've wrinkles galore,
But they don't get me down, and of one thing I'm sure:
I'm long out of my teens
And I never wear jeans
But I'm still eager for life, oozing out of each pore.

So, if ever you're feeling a little depressed,
Or run down or even a trifle distressed,
Just sweep all your cares and your worries aside,
The whole world will suddenly open out wide;
Then, just for a lark,
Take a walk in the park;
That's a therapy that I have quite often applied.

And now, friends, I promise, this is my last word
Of the worldly wise wisdom you've so patiently heard;
I always politely but firmly decry
Father Time's strictures, as loudly I cry:
I'm as old as I am
And I don't give a damn!

THE PENSIONERS' ASSOCIATION

Connie Fraser examines the history of this unique organisation - why not go along yourself?



The Pensioners' Association first drew breath in Brighton about 25 years ago. As the old-fashioned custom went in those days, the 'new baby' was given a long name – 'Pensioners and T.U. (Trade Unions) Action Association' which was promptly dropped in favour of the simple 'Pensioners' Association'. However, the original name does suggest a probable link with the BPTUAA and its publication – *The British Pensioner* – which continues to be distributed to members at our meetings.

Many earlier members bought with them expertise to guide the Association. Such a one was the indefatigable Barbara Wiseman, a professional journalist and the first editor of *The Pensioner*. She was followed by Len Goldman, who still contributes wise words at our meetings, even though he has handed over the editorship to a younger professional.

Our very well-loved Secretary, Sheila Schaffer, who worked in tandem with the Chair, Isla Robertson, was also a local Council member, serving her turn as Mayor, as well as being an active member of the local U.N.A (United Nations Association). She died in 2009, and we still sadly miss her.

Yet with Isla and the Committee officers holding the organisation together, we have a reliable continuity, though always open to changes. An obvious change recently has been our change from the Labour Club in Lewes Road to our present base in Patching Lodge, Eastern Road. There is no change in the timing of the meetings, which continue to be held at 11am on the second Tuesday of each month.

Over the years we have enjoyed a wide variety of speakers, with the representatives of many local groups, such as The Brighton Housing Trust, The Citizens Advice Bureau, Brighton and Hove Buses, Sussex Wildlife Rescue. Speakers too have come from organisations giving us the 'bigger picture', as, for example, the European Movement, LEPR, and Cuba S.C.. Notable speakers have included Dorothy Engmann, David Lepper and Geoff Mead.

We plan to continue our balance of local and national issues, and to increase information about European pensioners compared with our own. We also hope that, with younger pensioners joining, we shall be able to send a representative to the National Pensioners Convention this year.

All of this of course depends on our members. We have a healthy membership of 140, but only 25 at the last meeting. Yet these gallant few provide a lively time, always willing to subject speakers to vigorous questioning and discussion! There's never a dull moment! *Connie Fraser.*

Saga's home care service now available in Brighton and Hove

Our home care service, Saga Independent Living, can help you to continue living in the comfort and security of your own home. A team of dedicated, well-trained carers can see to your day-to-day care needs, and we are now available in the Brighton and Hove areas.

Our day-to-day service

We can support you in your everyday life with a variety of services, from just one hour a week to help with household chores to several visits a day to assist with your care and wellbeing.

We can also provide extra support before or after a stay in hospital, making life easier while you recover. Plus if a family member or friend takes care of you, we offer a respite service to give them a break.

Saga has nearly 60 years' experience of providing services for the over 50s and our carers undergo an extensive training program. We also use a monitoring system to ensure our carers turn up on time and provide the right amount of care.

We provide assistance with...

- Getting up or going to bed • Bathing and showering • Shaving • Oral care • Dressing
- Toileting • Continence care • Feeding
- Medication • Making and changing a bed
- Preparing a shopping list • Shopping
- Laundry • Ironing • Preparing and cooking meals • General cleaning and much more...

Please call

0800 285 1857

for more information about Saga Independent Living, stating reference RP2109



New office open in Hove

If you are interested in receiving home care from Saga, you can now pop into our new office at 78 Goldstone Villas in Hove and have a chat with our friendly staff.

They will be able to tell you about our service and, if you want, arrange a personal assessment of your needs.

You're under no obligation when you visit. Plus there's plenty of information that you can take with you so that you can discuss our home care service with your family and friends.



SSA9199

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Caring done properly