

The Pensioner

Journal of the Brighton & Hove Pensioners' Forum

No. 36, Summer 2010

Election 2010

Uneasy bedfellows?

Francis Tonks looks at the recent election results to see what they could hold in store...

The Great British electorate has spoken and the result has been no clear winner in the battle for seats in parliament. The Conservatives emerged as the largest single party and after some horse trading formed an alliance with the Liberal Democrats. The televised debates between the three party leaders gave Nick Clegg a boost as it became a sort of beauty contest between three men in suits.

As older people we must ask 'what is the effect for us'? There will be six billion pound cuts in the public sector, no ID cards, Trident stays and tax concessions bringing a starting income tax rate of £10,000. Against this, VAT may well go up to 20%, hitting the poorest people in society. The Winter Fuel Allowance may also go. There will also be a referendum on the Alternative Voting system.

It is a mixed bag, Liberals and Tories making some compromises to cobble together their coalition. Cameron and Clegg, who even look alike and come from the same background, will find it hard to keep their troops in line. The public are increasingly sceptical after the expenses scandal and some believe politicians are all a lot of scoundrels, somewhere down there with estate agents and used car salesmen.



Here, the Tories took Brighton Kemp Town and Hove, and the sole Green MP, Caroline Lucas, won Brighton Pavilion. From the Older People's Council we have had discussions with her and her Labour opponent, Nancy Platts. Both were well aware of our issues. We hope all our MP's are mindful of the 47,000 older people they represent and support progressive measures to help us.

Finally, a few images stick in my mind – the Cameron-Clegg 'love-in' on the lawn at Downing Street and Gordon Brown and his family departing with some dignity. And a few thoughts – why did no-one mention Afghanistan? And let us thank the British people for rejecting the racists in our midst.

Inside this issue

Residents parking?



Activities & classes



Double issue

We've made this a double issue and have a special section on Social Exclusion in the centre pages. It's also jam-packed with all sorts of other information inside so read on...!

AGM

Come to the Pensioners' Forum Annual General Meeting! We are holding it at Patching Lodge, Eastern Road on 26th July, 10am for start at 10.30am. We want you to come along - all are invited. See inside for details or call 01273 229004...

Editor's Letter

Well, here we are again with our latest edition of *The Pensioner*, which I hope you will find informative and thought-provoking. We've been working hard to bring you this issue, which we've put together as a special 'double' edition with the centre section dedicated to information on Social Inclusion.

We are working to try to get across the aims of the Pensioners Forum; we want to provide information, to be a voice; and to accurately reflect the viewpoints of older people in Brighton, Hove and surrounding areas. In order to do this, we really need your input – so any articles, views, letters, feedback and questions are very much welcomed. We will publish what we can and do our best to promote and campaign on your behalf on issues which are important to older people. I've included below a small item below which outlines the aims of the Pensioners' Forum – I hope these make our purpose a little clearer! Flyers and posters will also be launched around the city soon.

We are also excited to say we are holding our AGM on Monday 26th July at Patching Lodge. We want you to come along and voice your concerns - we can make you heard, so do come along and join us (call 229004).

Any ideas for new places for circulation are welcomed, we'd like to reach as many as we can with our magazine. Our next issue is scheduled for around autumn time, so you have plenty of time to get in touch with your views on anything that matters to you! I hope you enjoy this latest edition of *The Pensioner*.



Lila Hunnisett
Editor / Administrator to the Pensioners' Forum

How to get in touch!

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We need volunteers! We want to get this magazine out to as many older people as possible. If you have anywhere in mind you could distribute to in your area, give us a call!

Would you like a large print copy? If so, please contact Lila on 01273 229004.

What is the Pensioners' Forum?

The Pensioners' Forum is a members' organisation of older people and older people's groups in Brighton, Hove and surrounding areas.

The aims of the Pensioners' Forum are:

- Engaging with older people
- Acting as a co-ordinating body for older people and older people's groups in Brighton & Hove
- Advocacy & campaigning on issues of importance for older people
- Promoting cultural, social and educational opportunities
- Challenging discrimination by encouraging understanding of older people's issues

Older People's Council News

Jack Hazelgrove, Chair of the OPC gives The Pensioner his regular update on the work of the OPC, which is 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

Now that the General Election is behind us, we at the Older People's Council need to look ahead to 2011 when both the main City Council and our own OPC are due for re-election. Over 47,000 older residents (60+) are eligible to vote in a full postal ballot for the nine members of the OPC.

Candidates are elected on a non-party political basis but may put out a personal statement to electors saying why they want to serve the senior citizens in their community. The annual electoral registration form has a tick box for those 70 plus but those between 60 and 70 need to let the office at the Town Hall know they wish to be put on the OPC register. Many already have done so but out of approximately 47,000 eligible to vote so far only roughly 27,000 are on our register. Although we consult widely with many other groups, we are concerned at the absence of women, minority ethnic representatives and disabled people. If you are in one of these groups please think about putting yourself forward in 2011. Meanwhile if you would like more information about us and what we can do please

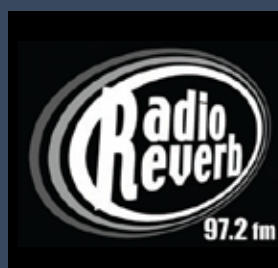
write to me, Jack Hazelgrove, Chair (OPC), c/o King's House, Grand Ave, Hove, BN3 2LS.

Turning to health matters, I recently had a checkup at my local GP surgery for blood pressure and cholesterol with the health care assistant and a follow-up with the nurse. I didn't need to take the initiative because the surgery wrote to me inviting me to make an appointment. This is very reassuring that periodic checks are made on older people's health. I was however, disturbed to hear from a health care professional that a programme of screening for bowel cancer for men aged 60 – 69 found many men failed to turn up for their appointment. A follow-up phone call often met with the response "Sorry but I'm rather busy just now". A test which could be potentially life-saving through early diagnosis should surely be top of anyone's agenda!

I have had several enquiries about our almost unique elected Council – one from a London Borough and an hour long interview with a French journalist from Dieppe. We are by no means perfect but I would like to see many more such councils representing the views of the over sixties who still have so much to offer our communities.

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

AGM The Pensioners' Forum are holding our Annual General Meeting at Patching Lodge, Eastern Road, Brighton on 26th July at 10.00 for a 10.30am start. Anyone is welcome to attend - just call us on 01273 229004 for more details. Come along and join us.



Turn on and tune in!

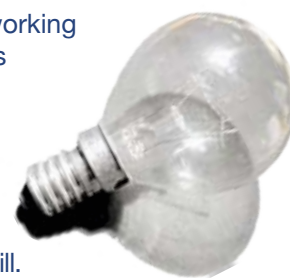
A new programme every fortnight broadcasts several items including interviews, reports and information of general interest to older people. At Home This Morning is on every Tuesday at 11am & Sunday at 10am on Radio Reverb, 97.2 FM.

Money back on energy bills

The government is working to help tackle fuel poverty. The Energy Rebate Scheme will benefit poorer older pensioners by giving them a one-off rebate in 2010 of £80 on electricity bills. To be eligible, a person must, on 26th March, 2010 have been:

- Receiving Pension Credit (guarantee credit only with no savings element)
- Aged 70 or over (or live with a partner who is)
- Living in a household where they or their partner are responsible for the electricity bill.

A rebate should be made automatically (no claim necessary) and the government should be writing to those eligible shortly. Further details are available by calling the Energy Rebate Scheme on 0845 600 0033.



Battle of Britain – 70th Anniversary

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, when from July to October 1940, the Germans carried out extensive bombing of airfields in the south east of England in an attempt to destroy the Royal Air Force, prior to invading the south coast using landing craft based across the channel in France (operation Sealion).

Although outnumbered in terms of aircraft and pilots our small force of young men stood against them and eventually obtained the upper hand causing the enemy to abandon the invasion and turn their attention to bombing London and many other towns and cities. Winston Churchill, who was prime minister at the time was inspired to quote 'Never in the field of human conflict, was so much owed to so many by so few'.

On this special anniversary, Brighton & Hove City Council have agreed to place a flowered tribute

in the shape of wings in Easthill Park, Portslade; and the RAF Ensign will be flying above the wings during Battle of Britain week, from 13th to 19th September.

Further information may be obtained by calling me on 07882 483288. *Les Terry, Chariman of Brighton & Hove RAF Association.*

NB: Our annual Battle of Britain Service takes place at the Barracks Church, St Martins, in Lewes Road, Brighton at 3pm on Sunday, 19th September. All are welcome.



Pensioners' Forum News

by Joan Moorhouse, member of the Pensioners' Forum

Last time I told you that we were experimenting with some Management Committee members taking turns in chairing the meetings. So far, Peter Lloyd, Diana Ward-Davis and Mick Lister have been in the chair. I have been impressed by how well this has worked and has meant that more members have been involved in receiving and disseminating information and making decisions. Francis Tonks is responsible for the next meeting.

In April we held a stall at April Falls Day at Hove Town Hall - a special event for older people showing how you can avoid osteoporosis, falls and broken bones - it was a great day and we handed out publicity and copies of *The Pensioner* which were well received.

Following last November's Older People's Day, we had a special meeting to discuss the future of this event. For several years this has been organised by the Pensioners' Forum and the Older People's Council and until 2008 we had the tremendous assistance of Paul Martin, the Council Support Officer of the OPC. Paul, who has moved on to other employment, was able to give Paula advice and, as before, a working group from the Forum and the OPC was set up with members taking responsibility for decisions and organising some aspects of the Day.

We have decided, regretfully, that the burden of being responsible for the event is too onerous for our

Administrator and Editor to add to her on-going duties in the limited hours she is employed by the Forum. We also need to conserve our diminishing funds for the production of *The Pensioner* and can no longer afford to provide refreshments and entertainment. Enquiries are being made to find out whether an event can be organised to include all older people in the City, possibly on International Older People's Day, 1st October, instead of having separate days and for which The Forum would not be expected to be responsible nor to finance.

The Primary Care Trust (PCT) currently pays for our Administrator's time and for 60+ Action Group's workers. We, with other groups, are known as Gateway Organisations, i.e. have access to our members to give them information and feedback their views. New contracts will be drawn up from next April and emphasis placed on conditions in order to receive funding. We, therefore, have to show the PCT how we propose to fulfil those conditions and this could mean even closer working with 60+ Action than presently.

The Forum also wish to have more personal contact with our members and open committee meetings to which all older people are invited are one way we hope to achieve this. We have our AGM coming up at Patching Lodge on 26th July at 10.00am at which we hope you all will attend to join in and make yourself heard. Look out for our next issue when we will be able to give you more details of what is going on!

60+ Action Group News



The 60+ Action Group runs group meetings for older people in four neighbourhoods across Brighton and Hove and is also affiliated with Evergreens Lunch Club. The purpose of the 60+ Action Neighbourhood Groups is to work together to enable older people to tackle issues which affect our everyday lives. Project Leader Jo Tulloch updates you on the group's recent activities.

There are big changes afoot at 60+ Action! Betty Davis has just left, having been "headhunted" by West Sussex for its own brand-new Lay Assessors Scheme. This entails visiting service users in hospitals and care homes to interview them and find out whether they are getting the service they need, and it is a job Betty loves doing. We will miss her cheery good humour, not to mention her persistence in getting agencies to improve their services. I know she will miss us too – she was at 60+ Action for nearly 12 years and the groups have been a big part of her life. We will be looking for a group worker soon, but in the meantime, I will be convening the groups, with the help of Lila from the Pensioners' Forum, and Alison, our much-appreciated volunteer.

The groups have had a busy few months. With Spring well and truly here, and the weather tempting us to get out more, it seems fitting that our theme for this year is Health. We have already had visits from the Food Partnership on Healthy Cooking for One on a Budget and an Active for Life health trainer. We also used a fascinating game about the NHS national database to help us decide whether to have our medical records included; this was part of a consultation by the LINK and the New Economics Foundation to inform patients about the pros and cons of the database. And finally, we

played host to a large group of pharmacy students and tutors from Brighton University, who were testing improved ways of informing patients about their medication.

Ageing is inevitable, decay is optional! This is the motto of the Oceans Wellbeing Centre in Rottingdean, whose trainers will be coming to the groups in May. They offer classes in something akin to Tai Chi, called Choi for Life. Betty and I met one of the trainers, Eugene, whose enthusiasm and dedication is infectious – we nearly signed up on the spot but decided to wait until we hear more. Eugene said 60% of their students are pensioners, and many have mobility problems – some serious – when they start, but seem to accomplish amazing things. One student, in her late 70s, was back in class four months after a hip replacement! If you would like more information about their classes, give them a ring on 307500. They do special rates for pensioners, and don't like to turn anyone away because of fees.

We are also hoping Anchor Housing will visit the groups to talk about their



services. For some years, Anchor offered an enhanced Handyperson service and the "Home Front" Safety and Security Audit service, which many people found useful as they helped stay in their own homes for longer. These services were recently transferred to In Touch Support, who will operate them as "HomeSafe". You can contact In Touch on 719724.

Enjoy the summer! We hope to have more news of 60+ Action in the next issue of The Pensioner. You can get in touch by calling us on 01273 229004.

60+ Action Group Diary - join in! call 01273 229004 for details

Craven Vale Group. Craven Vale Resource Centre, Queensway, Craven Vale.

- 30th June, 28th Jul, 29th Sep, 2.00pm-4.00pm.

Kemp Town Group. Courtney King House, Eastern Rd (next door to Sussex County Hospital).

- 13th July, 14th Sept - 2.30pm-4.00pm.

West Hove Group. Muriel House, Ingram Crescent West, Portland Road, Hove.

- 20th July, 21st Sept, 2.30pm-4.00pm.

Moulsecomb Group. The Orchards, Moulsecomb Way, Moulsecomb.

- 6th Jul & 7th Sept, 2.30pm-4.00pm.

Letters

Keeping fit!

Good health and mobility must come top of everyone's agenda, especially if you are more mature. Your readers may, therefore, be interested to know of a 'Keep Fit in Retirement' class which is gentle exercise to music for the over 60's and less able of any age (men and women). It is run by an experienced and sympathetic tutor and takes place on Tuesday afternoons, 4-5pm at the Friends Meeting House in Ship Street, Brighton (tel: 770258). The fee is £2.50 per class, payable at the door. Classes begin 28th September. A warm welcome awaits both those returning to the class and anyone coming for the first time. Tel: 01273 561571 (or 501571), 69 Old Mill Close, Brighton BN1 8NE 11/4/2010 – *Patricia Norman*

Prevention of illness

Prevention is better (and cheaper) than cure, so we should be spending more on preventing illness, and less on treatments which don't work (such as drugs with side-effects). I have written papers about this which are on section 9 of my website, www.reginaldkapp.org. In particular, complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), specializes in prevention of sickness, so should be integrated and provided free on the NHS. *John Kapp*

Editor: Thank you for sharing your views - what do others think?

Reflexology I'd like to invite *Pensioner* readers to try reflexology - I'm doing a special offer of second session half price (home visits can be made). It can be used on old and young, & has many benefits. Contact 01444245892/07713243514. *Michelle Garvey*

Dignity in dying

In your list of 10 Dignity Challenges in the spring issue, you left out dignity in dying. I am only 89 and have no need for any such help yet but fear that when the time comes, I may not know how to find or get it. Are any of your readers interested in this subject – for or against? Has anyone asked their GP, and what was the response? I would be interested to know what to do now, if anything, and what others have experienced. Maybe too late for some. Letters would be appreciated.

Hans Lobstein

Editor: Readers, please send further thoughts on this into us as we would be most interested to hear them.

May I congratulate the magazine on its revised layout and the trend toward sharper content which deserves encouragement. The different quality to the information in its pages is very welcome. Whilst reports on the various bodies acting on behalf of pensioners do have a proper place in the magazine, perhaps greater emphasis could be given to specific issues, treating them a little more in depth. So many matters of considerable import to pensioners just do not make it into mainstream media, and if the magazine could winkle these out of the mass of general information we will all be grateful to you.

As an example there is your item on the Equalities Bill. Along with many other people of a certain age I have been very irritated by the near impossibility of hiring a vehicle in this country and getting travel insurance. If the Bill stops this blanket discrimination it can only be supported, whatever its other faults. Perhaps you could

Editor: You will see another piece on the Equalities Act on page 7. We hope to cover other topics in future, your feedback is always welcomed.

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 feedback!

The Pensioners' Forum is here to raise your issues of concern, not only in this magazine, but through our committee, who are members of local steering groups and older people's organisations in the city.

Do send in any of your concerns, - be it housing, health, transport or anything else you think relevant - either directly to us for raising at our meetings, or to publish in *The Pensioner*. We exist to give you a voice!

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The Big Freeze
Pensioners' Forum member Francis Tonks reflects on the recent cold snap and its wider impact on the elderly community in Brighton and Hove

When all is said and done, the cold snap for several weeks. The snow came down, melted and then froze, making it impossible to walk without slipping over. My neighbour broke the wind and the N.I.C. Department of Greater County Hospital was swamped with hundreds of people who had fallen and broken bones. I needed to me that the Council were slow in getting out into the snow, but later all the staff returned and provided a good service. I remember one day when the snow was so thick that I had to go through the snow from Black Hill to Brighton one evening when most buses had stopped running. Perhaps our country is not prepared because this weather is exceptional.

In Germany people have to clear their paths and pavements. We used to do this in February a few years ago. Houses were warm and cozy. Traffic ran on time. Yet there was thick snow everywhere. I was particularly impressed to see smart young women social workers taking elderly pensioners out for a walk. I was one of one. Each pensioner had their own designated social worker.

In Britain, in spite of winter fuel payments to the elderly, there are a million people over 65 who live alone and are in real poverty. That means they spend more than 70% of their income on heating. Angela Eagle, minister for Pensions and the Aging Society says, "we have killed 500,000 pensioners out of relative poverty since 1997 and are spending over £13 billion a year more on pensions thanks to the introduction of means-tested pension credit and winter fuel payments". Yet Andrew Harrold, head of public policy at Age Concern, compares that progress in cutting poverty has come to a standstill in the last three years.

People on a pension should not have to choose between heating or eating. There needs to be a major hike in payments to a realistic £50 a year instead of the scheme, where you are on benefit and get £25 a day if it stops cold long enough. An Energy Bill is proposed to help the poorest households. The oldest and poorest people are the most at risk in heating conditions. Surely this cannot wait.

Inside this issue
PF News
Reporting on what People's Day 2010

Equalities Bill
Investigating how it might affect you

Have your say!
Come to the 'Any Questions' panel event where election candidates will answer your questions about issues which affect older people. 21st March at Brighton Town Hall - see page 3 for details!

keep us informed of progress on the Bill and perhaps expand on the likely effects for your readers.

Another very live issue is the discrimination in medical treatment handed out to pensioners. And closer to home the age-unfriendly buses the bus company have recently purchased for the number 50 route. I am sure that others can suggest similar topics worth raising.

D. Burns

Social Exclusion – or Social Inclusion?

These have been buzz-words during the past decade. Briefly: social exclusion is being unable to participate fully in one's society, through poverty, ill-health etc...social inclusion is its opposite, being an active member of one's society. These centre pages take a look at some of the issues centred around notions of inclusion.

The Equalities Act Samantha Bond from Age Concern tells us more

At Age Concern Brighton Hove and Portslade, the Information and Advice Service often gets enquiries from and about social care and health services. This is not surprising; people are more likely to use local services as they get older. Sometimes, for various reasons, older people find it difficult to access these services. Could the new Equality Act help address such difficulties?

On 8th April 2010 the Equality Bill became the Equality Act, bringing together 9 big equality laws and about 100 smaller laws. When it comes into force it will ban age discrimination. It includes two new duties for public bodies. The Public Sector Equality Duty makes it a legal requirement to consider the needs of people of all ages when designing and delivering public services. This should ensure that older people are treated fairly when receiving services such as social care and health care. Under The Socio-economic Duty public bodies must also consider what they can do to make their services more helpful to those who are less well off.

NHS Brighton and Hove Single Equality and Human Rights Scheme anticipated the Equality Act in a three year action plan. One of its objectives is to reduce health inequalities by ensuring services are accessible and effective. Brighton and Hove City Council's Housing Services have launched a pilot strategy which may offer additional support to some of the city's most deprived council tenants.

However, as well as equality in public services, the Act aims to ensure older people are treated fairly when buying goods. Companies must not make older people pay more for a service without good reason. In the past some shops have not offered help to older people because they think they do not understand about products such as mobile phones. The Equality Act has changed the law to stop this happening.

Other elements relevant to many older people will be protecting carers from discrimination and strengthened protection for disabled people. The



Act will also protect people from being discriminated against because of a combination of two things. For example being treated unfairly because of being an older woman or because of being an older gay man would be dual discrimination and the Act offers protection.

If you are over fifty and need advice on getting the services you need, or if you need advice on other matters please contact Age Concern Brighton Hove and Portslade Information and Advice Service on 01273 720603.

Paying for social care: where are we now?

The government's Green Paper (see *The Pensioner* no. 34 and 35) set out proposals for a National Care Service with three options of means of paying for it:

- **Comprehensive:** compulsory payment by all (rather like National Insurance)
- **Partnership:** share costs between the individual and the state
- **Insurance:** voluntary payment of premiums

The Big Care debate, between July and November 2009, sought our views; over 27,000 responded. Of these 41% preferred the comprehensive mode, 35% partnership and only 22% insurance.

The White Paper 'Building the National Care Service' (over 150 pages of heavy gloss paper) was published on the day before the announcement of the dissolution of parliament and the elections. It received but a day in the media spotlight. In it, the arguments for a National Care Service are repeated.

The government clearly favours the comprehensive option; but it cannot decide how we might pay for the service (e.g. regular payments throughout our working life and/or retirement, a lump sum on reaching retirement or at death) or the levels of care we might expect. It proposes a Royal Commission which will look into this and try to reach an all party consensus. A wait of several more years.

The issue received little coverage in the election campaign. All parties acknowledged that the present situation is a scandal; Labour prefers the comprehensive option, the Conservatives the insurance option. With facing our national debts the major theme, parties were not going to tackle the increased public spending involved in promoting free social care.

So where does this leave us? Will the white paper serve as a basis for discussion in the coming months – or will it be quietly buried and forgotten? It's up to us to ensure that the debate continues.

Ethnic Minorities in our City

Brighton and Hove may be famous (or infamous) for a number of things, but having a large ethnic minority population is not one of them.

Only 12% of the city's total population is not white British – but only 6% of the over 60's (2001 census, the figures are probably higher today). But those have greatly increased the cultural diversity of our city in recent decades. Clearly evident are more ethnic restaurants and shops selling 'exotic' vegetables and groceries.

Those in the minority groups have come here from all over the world and over long periods of time. There have been few migratory waves – such as the arrivals of the Caribbeans in the 50's and the Asians expelled from East Africa in the 70's. None of our wards has an unusually high population of ethnic minority groups. Most migrants have adapted well into our society, however varied their individual characteristics; some are affluent, others poor; some are permanent settlers, others transients. Some, usually the better educated, seem almost completely assimilated while others remain encapsulated within their own ethnic group, relying strongly on friends and relatives for help and support. Some make frequent and regular visits to their home localities, others have not been back for decades and see little prospect in the future.



Ethnicity in Brighton & Hove
Population over 60 years (2001 census)

- White British - 47,694
- White other (e.g. Irish, European etc) - 2,394
- Mixed race (e.g. White/Black/Asian) - 922
- Asian (e.g. Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi) - 433
- Black (e.g. Caribbean, African) - 126
- Chinese or other - 190
- TOTAL: 51,069**

Many in our ethnic minority population have formed associations which are very important; both in promoting mutual support among members and also in helping them to maintain their cultural identity. In this and subsequent editions of *The Pensioner*, we are planning to highlight the work of some of these associations. So please write in and tell us about your own group.

Cultural diversity is something we all must value; but important too is our own obligation to ensure that our ethnic minority population has access to all services, does not experience discrimination. So tell The Pensioners' Forum about your problems and we will make you heard.

The Hindu Elders

Sathi Sivapragasm is a Hindu who travelled to the UK in 1973 from her native Sri Lanka. She explains a little about the Hindu Elders and her experiences as a Tamil in the UK since arriving in 1973.

Brighton and Hove has a substantial number of people of the Hindu faith. Most are from the Indian sub-continent (and many are from the Gujarati region of India). Many come here when obliged to leave East Africa in the 70's. Many, of all ages, worship at the Hindu temple in Victoria Park, Portslade.

The Hindu Elders are a relatively small group of over 50's (our oldest member is 96). Some 20 of us meet every week in Old Viaduct Court, an Anchor Trust sheltered housing scheme. Transport is arranged for those who cannot travel by bus. Here, we enjoy a wide range of activities – for example, some gentle exercises, talks about dementia. Most meetings include singing religious songs and some dancing. At last November's Older People's Day in Hove Town Hall, we contributed a session of our traditional dances. Recently following the death of one of our members, with hymns and prayers we supported friends and family.

Our group is active too in the BME Elders lunch, held every week in Evelyn Glennie Court (another Anchor Trust scheme), to which all are invited.

I myself come from Sri Lanka – but I am a Tamil; a Hindu group which entered the island a long time ago from south India. In recent years the Tamil Tigers have been engaged in trying to assert our rights in the country – but

with little success. My own family home in Jaffna, the principal town, was destroyed by the fighting in 1983; so I am in many respects a 'refugee'.

My own father studied medicine in Edinburgh University in the 1920's. I came to England in 1973 and for many years worked in a bank in Northampton. I moved to Portslade three years ago to be near my daughter. My other close relatives are scattered across the continents. Here in my retirement I am active in many organisations – some national like the WRVS, others involving the Portslade community. But central to my interests is the Hindu community. I feel at home in England – but it is very important to maintain my Hindu/Tamil identity.

For further information, contact Rama on 01273 732428.



Patching Lodge Art Class by June Broadhurst

LifeLines at Age Concern Brighton, Hove and Portslade is running a variety of interesting and creative activities for over 50s at Patching Lodge on Eastern Road. Anyone from the Tarn, Queen's Park and Craven Vale is welcome to come along and enjoy these free activities, which are organised and run by our wonderful team of volunteers.

The class began with a flyer coming through my letterbox. It was from a new project called LifeLines – about older people helping other older people. It was asking for volunteers with special skills, like cooking, reading aloud or knitting to consider starting a group to help others and have a go. Also, it was to let people know about the groups which were already up and running. It sounded to me to be a very worthwhile project, and being 'older' myself I rang LifeLines, mentioned that in retirement I spent all my time painting – and from that the Patching Lodge Art Group materialized.

I had never taught a group before, so it was a challenge to me. My background in art started with a scholarship to Scarborough School of Art, where I did the traditional course in learning to observe and draw, followed by two years studying Textile Design. Then followed fifteen years as an interior designer. But after a change in personal circumstances I trained and then worked as a social worker, following that with a third career as a psychotherapist. My fourth career started when I retired nine years ago and I immediately went back to art, but to painting pictures – landscapes, portraits, trees, flowers and still life - in fact, whatever excited me.

I had had two Open Houses in the Brighton Festival, and a one man show at the Grange in Rottingdean, another in Seaford; also in two psychotherapy clinics in London and in restaurants in Sussex. So retirement is being very enjoyable for me.

The art class at Patching Lodge began at the beginning of January this year, and we have met weekly for two hours from 10am to midday. It will now meet on Wednesdays. It is not only for residents at Patching Lodge, but also for anyone, over 50, living in the Queen's Park, Tarn, and Craven Vale areas of the city. At present the ages of the group members vary from 56 to 90, and we have 8 members. Some members have been painting all their lives, and some have not touched a paint brush since leaving school. Some just want to have the space and materials, and a friendly atmosphere to do their own thing, and others come wanting to help take their work a bit further; and beginners often need help to get over their inhibitions about thinking they are no good at art, but have always wanted to paint. But all are welcome. The classes are free and materials are provided.



June and her class in action at Patching Lodge

It seemed to me to be important to start by getting to know people, and to find out what each person wanted to get from the class. And I hoped to make it both enjoyable and creative. So far we have done something different each week. We have experimented with water-colours, acrylics, charcoal, pastels and mixed media. On two occasions we had a live model. We usually spend the first half hour trying to do an accurate drawing of objects and follow this up by making the line drawing a picture from the imagination called 'a rainy day'. So as you will see we work quite hard! The idea is to help people really look at what they see, and to help them improve their drawing and painting skills, but also to encourage people to create a finished picture, and to use their imagination.

We are all amazed at the end of our morning's work to see the variety in the pictures and how creative they are. People seem happy to comment on each other's work, and often to give spontaneous encouragement to each other. It is great to see enthusiasm and tackle quite difficult projects, and by the willingness to give new materials and ways of doing things a go.

So, if anyone, either experienced or a beginner, wants to enjoy meeting other like-minded people don't hesitate to ring LifeLines; you will be most welcome. Also do ring them if you have other skills which people might enjoy sharing, or if you wish to find out more about the existing groups. The telephone number is 01273 508118.

Could you help? The Council is looking for volunteers to act as 'buddies' for people who use the Montague House resource centre for adults with physical disabilities in Montague Place, Kemp Town, Brighton. Could you spare a couple of hours a week to help a local person with a physical disability? The service users have hobbies, interests and pastimes they would like to share, or things they want assistance with. To find out more, email charlie.notley@brighton-hove.gov.uk or call 01273 295454.

Supporting people

Strategy review and consultation

Supporting people is one (albeit, relatively small) of the streams by which state funding is provided to support vulnerable people to maintain independence and a good quality of life. In our city, it supports sheltered and extra-care housing (though it is conscious, too, of the needs of all those older people living in their own homes in the community); it also supports the dispersed alarm service (CareLink), money support services and home improvements for those with physical disabilities. A dozen care groups are recognised but older people receive by far the largest share of the funds.

Every three years the SP team reviews the strategy to make sure that it is funding the right services to meet the needs of vulnerable people; this year the task is particularly difficult as it is feared that the expected overall cut of 15% in public spending will fall more heavily on preventative services than "protected"

acute services. So the team is asking: what services have really made a difference? How? What did not work well? What else would you have liked? What are your goals? The consultation period lasts until the end of June.

One thing most valued by older people is a sense of security; this is achieved through a knowledge of what support services are available and how we can access them. But such needs are not easily quantified; they are irregular. They can be delivered by a wide range of service providers in both public and voluntary sectors.

In recent months we have seen much more collaboration between these providers – joined up working, sharing of budgets. But at the present time managers tend to hold on tightly to existing budgets in the face of the uncertainty of future allocations.

So it is up to us to speak out – to say what we feel that we really need and how these needs might be met. Send your thoughts to Kate Dale at Bartholomew House – email her at kate.dale@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Brighton & Hove Local Involvement Network update

Brighton and Hove Local Involvement Network (LINK) is a local, powerful, independent network of people and organisations which give citizens a stronger voice in how their health and social care services are delivered. There is a LINK in every local authority area and LINKs are completely independent of the NHS B&H and Local Authority.

LINKs have a range of powers so that they can say how local services should improve:

- Make reports and recommendations and get a reply within a set amount of time
- Ask for information and get a reply within a set amount of time
- Go into some types of services to see what they do
- Tell elected politicians on an Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) what they have found and get a response.

Brighton and Hove LINK is currently working on a number of issues and we want to know what you think!

Hospital discharge – has your discharge been delayed? Were you given enough information on your discharge? If you needed transport home from hospital, was a vehicle appropriate to your needs provided?

Out of Hours GPs – have you called your GP after 6.30pm or at weekends? Were you satisfied with the service you received?

Access to NHS dentistry – have you had any problems accessing an NHS dentist? Do you understand NHS charging?

Have you made a complaint to the Local Authority or NHS about health or social care? Was it easy to complain? Did you get the response you wanted?

Social Care – do you receive care at home? Are you satisfied with the time of day and night you receive this care? Are you satisfied with the service you receive?

How you can help:

You can help to improve health or social care by:

- joining an action group on any of the above
- completing a short survey – contact us to do this
- letting us know of your issues – by email, phone or post

Tel: 01273 810235

Email: charlotte@cvsectorfourm.org.uk

Post: Freepost RSGY-UXAC-ZZZG

**Brighton & Hove
Local Involvement
Network,
BRIGHTON, BN1
4GQ**

**or visit our website
www.bhlink.org.uk**



Healthcare Trusts to join forces

A new community Healthcare Trust is being created to serve communities across Brighton & Hove and West Sussex. South Downs Health's Head of Engagement Sue Trimmingham explains what this will mean for residents.

The next few months will see the formal integration of West Sussex Health (Community Services) and South Downs Health NHS Trust – an established community healthcare provider for nearly two decades.

The new organisation will offer the people of Brighton & Hove and West Sussex greater choice in both the type of care they receive and where they receive it. It is hoped that the integration will also strengthen the Trust's ability to deliver innovative, flexible services that mirror changing patient needs. Being part of a larger organisation will allow staff to share professional expertise, ideas and best practice with a wider range of colleagues and to build up strong working relationships with a range of health and social care partners across Sussex.

Although we will be a larger organisation, the fundamental way in which services are provided will not change. As always, dedicated NHS staff will put patients' needs first. The new Trust will work with over 9,000 people daily across West Sussex and Brighton & Hove.

The new Trust will support long, healthy lives for the people of West Sussex and Brighton & Hove. To help us achieve this, we would like more information about your needs.

If you have any comments, questions or suggestions about community health services, please call me on 01273 696011 ext 3115 or email sue.trimingham@southdowns.nhs.uk. A full list of our services can be found at: www.southdowns.nhs.uk/services



Your blood pressure – what is it?



Blood pressure is important – that much most of us know. High blood pressure (hypertension) greatly increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes. But high blood pressure rarely produces obvious symptoms – no aches, pains or dizziness. So how do we know that we have it? A regular check is clearly important. If we visit our GP with some obvious symptoms of ill-health, she/he will most certainly check blood pressure as a diagnostic test. But what if you see no cause to visit your GP? Answer: DIY.

Home testing kits are available (the British Heart Foundation will advise on models); select one which uses the upper arm, not the wrist. Most surgeries and pharmacies now have kits for drop-in use. These are generally reliable but they should be regularly serviced and checked – once a year if in constant use.

Our blood pressure can vary quite widely within minutes if we are under physical or mental stress, so don't rely on a single random test. Take three or four readings in the course of a day. Sit quietly for a few minutes before the test, and don't watch the screen – the initial figures are high but reduce; seeing a high figure might cause panic and a high final reading.

Finally one has a set of readings; but what is normal? The text-book figure is usually 110 (systolic) over 70 (diastolic); but this is for younger people – with age, blood pressure tends to rise. If you are constantly gathering readings much above 140/90, or if you are worried in any way, you ought probably to see your GP for advice. Whatever you do – don't ignore your blood pressure. It's your health that is at stake – don't ignore it!

Singing for people with breathing difficulties

The Brighton and Hove "Breatheasy Singing Groups" have been the first of their kind in England. Set up by the Primary Care Trust more than 3 years ago, they are aimed at people with any kind of breathing difficulty (COPD, Asthma, non-smoking support etc.), to improve lung function, breathing technique and well-being.

Now that they are supported by the Sidney de Haan Research Centre for Arts & Health/ University of Canterbury, they take part in research into the benefits of singing for people with breathing difficulties.

Each session consists of breathing/singing exercises – and singing songs, accompanied by a pianist. All are welcome, no singing ability is required. The atmosphere is relaxed and friendly, having fun is important! Friends and family are welcome.

£2 per session, Mondays: 1.45 to 3.15 at Patching Lodge, Brighton, Park St./ Eastern Rd, BN2 0AQ (near Bingo Hall) Fridays: 11.30 to 1pm at Ralli Hall, Denmark Villas (back entrance), Hove (close to Hove station). Info: Udita Everett, tel: 01273 556755.

WWW... The Pensioners' Forum have had some good news – we've been awarded a grant of £600 to build a website. Thanks to the Argus Community Sport Relief Awards we are now able to get all our information onto the world-wide web. We're hoping to get it set up in the next few months but would like ideas from you of what you might like to see on there. Please send us your ideas around how you might like it to work. We'll keep you informed of the progress and let you know when it's up and running! And for those of you who don't have computer access, you can always call us for information and help, on 01273 229004.

Heatwave advice

Protecting yourself and others during hot weather

Climate change means that heatwaves and high temperatures are likely to become more common in England.

Who is at risk?

Anyone can experience heat related symptoms but some people may have a higher risk of serious harm. These include:

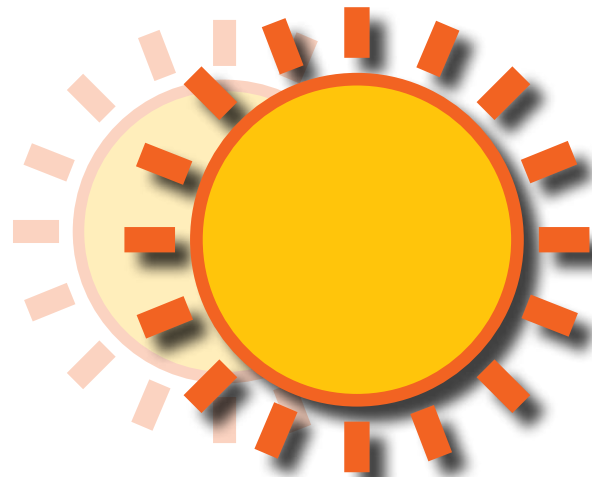
- Babies and young children.
- Older people, especially women and those over 75.

and people with:

- serious mental health problems.
- certain medication requirements.
- chronic conditions - particularly breathing or heart problems.
- a high temperature from an infection.
- mobility problems.
- physically active lives, e.g manual workers, or those taking part in sports activities.

Staying safe

Planning ahead can reduce your own risk of getting ill and help protect anyone you know who could be vulnerable.



What you can do:

- Keep out of the heat - avoid the hottest part of the day (11am-3pm)
- Stay cool
- Drink regularly
- Check on people you know who may be at risk
- Seek advice if you have concerns

Contact a doctor, pharmacist or NHS Direct if you are worried about your health during a heatwave, especially if you are taking medication, if you feel unwell or have any unusual symptoms.

Watch for:

- cramp in your arms, legs or stomach,
- feelings of mild confusion,
- weakness
- problems sleeping

If you have these symptoms, rest for several hours, keep cool and drink water or fruit juice. Seek medical advice if they get worse or don't go away.

In a clear medical emergency where a person is plainly seriously ill, telephone 999 or 112 and ask for 'ambulance'.

NHS Brighton and Hove, South Downs Health NHS Trust, Brighton and Hove City Council and other partner agencies are working together to finalise a local heatwave plan for the city.

A guide entitled 'Looking After Yourself And Others During Hot Weather' is available by visiting www.orderline.dh.gov.uk and quoting 301454/Heatwave or by calling: tel: 0300 123 1002 / Minicom: 0300 123 1003 (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday).



Brighton and Hove



SENS – a progress report

The South East Network of Seniors, launched last November (see last issue no. 35, p8) is making steady progress. Peter Lloyd has joined its management committee in place of Sheila Schaffer.

A lengthy mission statement sets out SENS' aims and objectives; to promote and facilitate the development of local associations and forums of older people – by mapping existing activity and encouraging development where few associations exist; by monitoring the ways in which these associations interact with and influence the local authorities; by organising meetings and conferences to share experiences and stimulate good practice.

SENS is accountable to these local associations and also to the Government Office of the South East (GOSE) and, with it, to the South East Regional Forum on Ageing (SEFRA). GOSE has strongly supported the development of SENS – but it has provided no funding.

SENS has been created through a very small bursary and the secretarial support of AgeUK's Civic Engagement team. Unpaid volunteers give thousands of hours in working for such local associations; but their efforts must be supported by financial aid to cover the administrative costs of maintaining their organisations.

Want *The Pensioner* posted to your door?

If so, consider joining the Pensioners' Forum and help to support our publication. Only £3 per year. Details and a membership form can be found on the back of this magazine.



Changes for Carers

In April, a new Carer's Credit was introduced, along with changes to the way Carer's Allowance is claimed.

Those caring for disabled people for 20 hours or more a week will be able to get Carer's Credit if:

- the person(s) they are looking after receives the middle or highest care component of Disability Living Allowance, or any rate of Attendance Allowance
- the person, or persons, have been certified by a health or social care professional as needing the level of care provided.

People will need to apply for this weekly credit. For more information about the claims, call the Carer's Allowance Unit on 0845 608 4321.

Be aware

Brighton & Hove Trading Standards are asking residents and especially older vulnerable adults not to engage with doorstep callers in buying or selling. The Trading Standards office is giving free stickers to put on your door to notify sellers they are not invited. Contact 0845 040506 for more details.

AGE
Concern
BrightonHovePortslade

**Age Concern
Brighton Hove
& Portslade**



We rely on your donations and legacies, so...
give locally, benefit locals!

Call us on:

01273 720603

info@ageconcern-bhp.org.uk
www.ageconcernbrighton-hove.org.uk

Planning ahead?

The DWP have recently been pushing a campaign to publicise the State Pension changes which came into effect on 6th April 2010. The campaign encourages people to think about how they will fund their retirement by finding out about their State Pension and options for adding to it. It also helps people to find out how the changes might affect them. Information is available at www.direct.gov.uk/betterfuture or by calling 0800 6781132 – make sure you don't miss out on anything which could help.



NO!

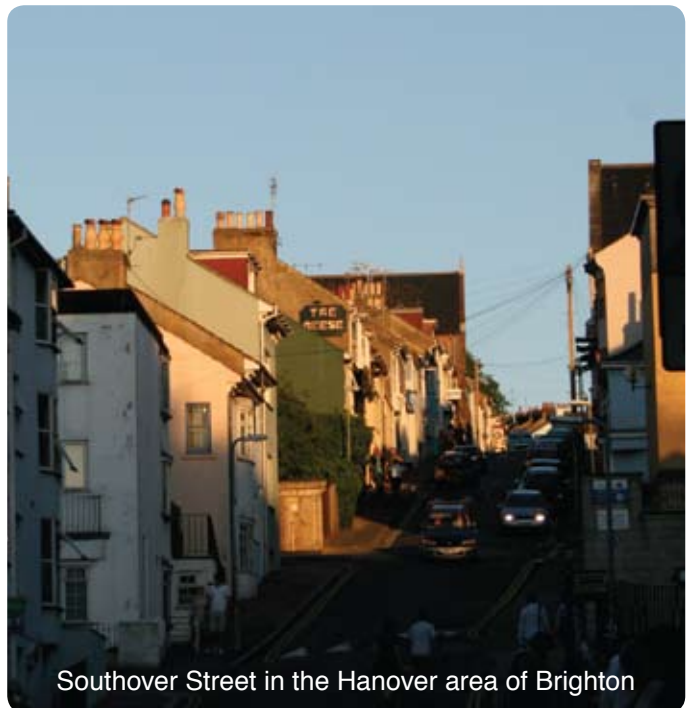
Residents of Hanover and Elm Grove are uniting against the proposed Residents' Parking Scheme. Connie Fraser examines the case against it...

If you had been walking down Elm Grove on Wednesday evening of May 12th, you might have been surprised at the sight of a long orderly queue stretching ahead and growing every minute. People of all ages were in attendance, many talking animatedly as they moved slowly down steps into the Elm Grove school playground. Eventually, we numbered about 300, some sitting on chairs but mostly standing.

With the aid of a small megaphone, Councillor Bill Randall explained the City Council's 'Residents' Parking Scheme for the Hanover and Elm Grove Area' – a consultation document already sent to us. Questions and discussion points abounded, the megaphone passing to and fro. A few of the crowd agreed with some sort of traffic control, but most of us said an emphatic 'NO!' to the scheme. If implemented, it would mean for many streets only half the number of residents' cars would be allowed to park there – so where else would they go?

At present in Carlyle Street, for instance, there is plenty of room for parking during the day, and the only problem is fitting in at night. Yet the scheme proposes to reverse this by making parking reserved during the day but free at night! And where would any visitors' cars fit in? – something particularly important to older residents living alone! And the small traders, the window cleaners – where would they park their cars?

Wherever it would be, if the scheme is implemented, all parking, whether of residents, visitors or traders, would cost us money - £108



Southover Street in the Hanover area of Brighton

a year for a resident's pass, £2 per day for a visitor's, and so on. And for these costs to us, we would 'enjoy' only the blessing of the Council and lose all our freedom of movement in this stranglehold of red tape.

Bill Randall told us that the Council department concerned had been notified of this meeting but had declined to come as it was 'unofficial'. What a pity! They missed a most exhilarating and purposeful event – a real example of 'grass roots' democracy in action.

'Power to the people!', as so many politicians say. Let us show our power by sending this reprehensible scheme packing with a unanimous 'NO!'

Reading into it

Libraries are important for everyone - no matter what your age. Champion of local libraries, Christopher Hawtree, tells us more...

From the campaign to save Hove's Carnegie Library, I particularly treasure the moment, one dark afternoon, when I held aloft our bold SAVE HOVE LIBRARY poster in front of an infant whose parents were signing a form to support us. I pointed to each word on the yellow poster, and he spoke them aloud confidently. "He didn't know those words before," said his mother, "and he's only three." I said he would be going places, and doubtless has begun to do so.

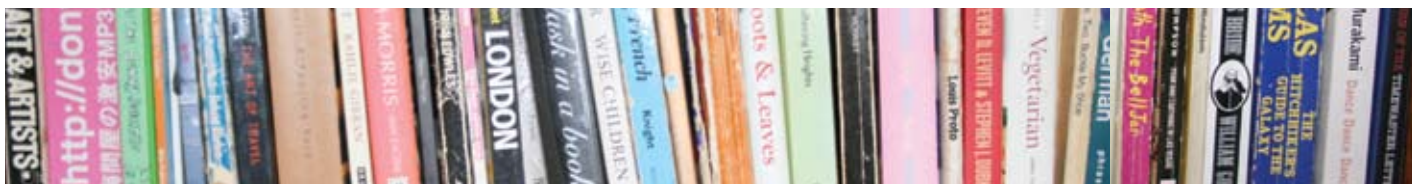
Other parents told me that their children liked to count the posters in house and shop windows. If any children managed the whole five thousand then we should have done as much for fitness as numeracy.

All of this is to say that the campaign galvanised Hove, Portslade, and beyond. To dwell on children's reactions when the apparent subject is pensioners and libraries is to emphasise that a good library is democracy in action. An early delight in libraries brings a lifelong pleasure, every day a new discovery, which is perhaps the spirit which brings a long, full life rather than one which slips

through the fingers. A good book, of whatever sort, can foster those interests which hold back time.

Towards the end of the century, that three-year-old boy might be following the example of the great American writer Edmund Wilson, who was learning Hungarian in his eighties, or he might have in his bag a clutch of detective stories, something much enjoyed by Bertrand Russell during the rigours of his work at ninety for CND. He might even himself have taken up novel writing, as Mary Wesley did with bravura when others no longer set the alarm clock.

There is no predicting what people might choose to do, and when. A well-stocked library, with high shelves to help those who can no longer readily stoop, is something in which one and all can happily exist side by side - whether as books on the shelves or readers browsing them. Young and old can point others in the direction of something they might enjoy; equally, they can remain silent, books stowed into a bag and off: a library is as varied as its readers, each of whom regards it as their personal property, life's passport.



LifeLines Age and Experience Making a Difference

**Do you have a skill or passion you would like to share?
Then we would love to hear from you!**

The **LifeLines** project at Age Concern Brighton, Hove and Portslade is funded to help older people run innovative projects that encourage health and well-being.

We are giving volunteers aged 50 and over an opportunity to run their own activities for older people in the Queen's Park, Turner and Craven Vale areas of Brighton, with full support from the LifeLines team.

We already support several volunteer-led activities at Patching Lodge on Eastern Road, including an Art class for beginners, a Dance class, a Read Aloud group, a Reminiscence group and a Knitting group.

If you have a skill or passion that you would love to share, anything from music and movies to ballroom dancing or martial arts, we would love to hear from you so we can start to help you make those ideas a reality!

Contact: Janette Palfrey or Gwyn Chanlewis / Telephone: (01273) 508118 Email: lifelines@ageconcern-bhp.org.uk
Write to: LifeLines, 2A Port Hall Road, Brighton BN1 5PD



Lifelong learning at U3A



From art appreciation and intermediate Spanish, to singing and walking groups; there's all this and more waiting for you through U3A, University of the Third Age. U3A is a learning co-operative of people no longer in full time employment - and anyone can join. All you need is interest and enthusiasm, with no qualifications required

and none to achieve. It offers the opportunity to share your knowledge, experience and talents with others and learn from them in friendly surroundings.

Everyone who is no longer in full-time employment is invited to join the Brighton and Hove University of the Third Age at meetings that are held mornings or afternoons at a variety of venues in the city. There is no lower age limit for joining, although nearly all of their members are of 'mature years'. Membership fees are £23 yearly, which entitles you to free membership of any of the groups listed on their programme.

For further information and an application form contact the U3A Membership Secretary on 01273 674061 (early evenings only) or go online at www.brightonandhoveu3a.org.uk. There is an Open and Enrolment Day for the new year on August 4th at the Friends' Meeting Place in Ship Street, Brighton.

Stay in the know!

A directory of services for people aged 50+ in Coldean is available from Steve Andrews, tel: 01273 229004.

Dementia info events

NHS Brighton & Hove are putting on events entitled 'Living with Dementia' (24th June, 10am–3.30pm, BRIGHTHELM CENTRE) and 'Living Supported with Dementia' (25th August, 10am–3.30pm, BRIGHTHELM CENTRE) - for info call 01273 545425.

Pensioners' Association: forthcoming meetings

The following are the next meetings of the Brighton, Hove and District Pensioners' Association. NB: We meet on the second Tuesday of the month, at Patching Lodge, Eastern Road; meetings are at 10.30am for 11.00am, when the speaker begins. (If you need directions to Patching Lodge, please ring the Acting Secretary, Bruce Smith, tel: 698737).

- 8 June - Speaker: Craig Golding: Citizens' Advice Bureaux
- 13 July - Speaker: Glyn Sweet: The Samaritans
- 10 August - (to be confirmed)

If you enjoyed reading this, why not join the Brighton and Hove Pensioners' Forum today?

Annual Membership Fee just £3

What you get for your subscription:

- Membership of an organisation run by older people for older people
- 'The Pensioner' magazine delivered to your doorstep quarterly
- A chance to be elected to the management committee
- Opportunities to participate in our campaigning work
- Opportunities to participate in a range of other Forum activities (to date these have included poetry, art, theatre, dance, music and photography projects)

I wish to join the Brighton & Hove Pensioners' Forum (subscription renewable each November).

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Subscription renewal: **YES / NO** New member: **YES / NO**

Where did you get this magazine? _____

Cheques payable to Brighton & Hove Pensioners' Forum, and returned to: Pensioners' Forum, 1st Floor, Interger 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 _____