



# GREY MATTERS

## **MORE THAN 25% OF OVER 65s NOT BEING VACCINATED**

### **Senior citizens at risk of life-threatening flu this winter**



With winter fast approaching, Help the Aged is urging people over 65 to book an appointment with their GP now and get vaccinated against flu this year.

Dr Lorna Layward, research manager at Help the Aged, says:

"Every year, an average of 3,000 to 4,000 people die because of flu and most of these deaths occur in people over 65 years old. It is well known that as you get older, your immune system becomes less effective which means that your ability to fight off infections is greatly reduced.

"And for older people, the misery caused by flu is multiplied. Once the severe illness has passed, it can still take several weeks to recover properly and may lead to severe and sometimes fatal complications such as bronchitis and

pneumonia.

"Older people living in care homes are at even greater risk because of the ease and speed at which the flu virus can spread when high risk groups live together.

"Prevention is better than cure and we're therefore urging everyone over 65 to make sure they have their annual jab this year."

Help the Aged has produced an advice leaflet, 'Fight the Flu', which explains what flu is, who is at risk and what to do if you have flu. To receive a free copy, people can call 020 7239 1845 or send a sae to Information Resources (FLU), Help the Aged, 207-221 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ. Help the Aged advice leaflets can also be picked up from your local Help the Aged shop or downloaded from the Help the Aged website (see below).

The pneumonia vaccination is also recommended to people over 65 who may not have had it. You only need one vaccination against this in your lifetime.

One of the current challenges of immune research is to understand why older people's immunity declines. The Help the Aged Biomedical Research into Ageing Programme is exploring new ways of boosting immunity in later life.

While uptake is improving, in the 2004 - 2005 flu season, only seven out of ten people aged over 65 had a flu jab.

Visit Help The Aged's new website: <http://www.helptheaged.org.uk> for advice & information, news & campaigns, discussions, events and shopping.

## **PAVEMENTS ARE FOR PEOPLE - a response to our article**

In July we wrote about the problems many of us experience when cars park on pavements.

We have had a response from Maresfield Parish Council, who have produced a leaflet headed "PLEASE DON'T PARK ON THE PAVEMENT" which has been approved by both Sussex Police and East Sussex County Council. This leaflet points out the inconvenience caused to pedestrians, especially parents with buggies and the elderly, by obstruction of the footway, and can be placed by authorised persons under the windscreen wiper of offending vehicles.

We intend to circulate this idea to other Parish Councils in Wealden, but if this is a problem in your area, you can take the matter up yourself with your Town or Parish Council and suggest that they produce a similar leaflet, in conjunction with the local Police and County Council.

Let us know how you get on.

**PLEASE DON'T JUST READ THIS NEWSLETTER AND THROW IT AWAY. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN ISSUES OF CONCERN TO OLDER PEOPLE WE NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU. PLEASE BECOME A MEMBER OF THE WEALDEN SENIOR CITIZENS' PARTNERSHIP BY COMPLETING AND RETURNING THE SLIP ON THE BACK PAGE.**

## OLDER PEOPLE “MISSING OUT” ONLINE



Older people are missing out on critical services because they do not use the internet, a report says. That more than half of all people over 65 voluntarily excluded themselves from internet access because they see no benefit to the net.

However, more than two thirds of pensioners who are currently not connected said they would get online if they had the right support. Specifically, they said they wanted courses designed for and run by older people.

John Carbis, a retired Royal Engineer who supervises the cybercafe at the Royal Hospital in Chelsea, which has grown from four second hand computers three years ago to ten today, says that

there is a training need. In his experience, anything new is treated with suspicion, which creates a barrier. The hospital cybercafe now attracts more than 60 regulars who come to e-mail and use the internet. Mr Carbis runs courses and says that older people can soon get the hang of using a computer.

The UK government has signed up to an EU agreement to halve by 2010 the gap in internet use for groups, such as older people, at risk of exclusion. A spokesman at Help the Aged does not think this goes far enough and has said: “the government must revisit this strategy if a significant proportion of older people are not to become more excluded from society”. Of particular concern is that more government services, including benefits, are being offered online and without training to access them many older people will miss out.

### WSCP WELCOMES NEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

We are delighted to announce that Dr Arnold Goldman, from Cowbeech, Herstmonceux, has agreed to become the tenth member of our Committee. The committee now stands as follows: Hanno Fry and Renée Goddard (01825 712410), Sally Butler (01825 732316), Ivy Elsey (01435 863719), Linda Graham (01892 770487), Ann Haig McVitty (01892 661763), Kath Harburn (01825 761314), William Porter (01435 812177), June Street (01435 867497) and Arnold Goldman (01323 832311).

**Heyday**   
**It's you time**

**HEYDAY** has been described by the Director General of Age Concern as a new organisation for people over 50 in the UK to help them to be better informed, better connected, better off and more powerful.

By means of its glossy magazine and website, HEYDAY aims to be able to influence the Government on important issues relating to older people: members will receive the HEYDAY Magazine, which is packed with interesting articles, six times per year. The Local Organiser, Maggie Whitmore, is available to discuss membership in more detail (see below). She would be delighted to do talks to Groups, Clubs and Societies so do give her a call. Eventually Maggie will be involved in organising social activities based upon the needs and wishes of local members.

The cost of joining HEYDAY is £20 for a year's membership; a second person at the same address will be given free membership. The good news is that your membership fee is soon recouped by taking advantage of the package of deals and discounts, products and services which are available!

For example, Freedom Leisure is offering all HEYDAY members the chance to join any of their 14 Freedom Centres throughout East Sussex at discounted rates. Members will be entitled to join at the Corporate Rate applicable at your chosen location in Bexhill, Crowborough, Hailsham, Hassocks, Hastings (5), Heathfield, Ringmer, Rye or Uckfield (2) and enjoy:

- \* Unlimited swimming
- \* Unlimited Gym
- \* Unlimited exercise Classes (including Prime time)

There is no contract and No Joining Fee saving Heyday members a further £25! For more information visit [www.freedom-leisure.co.uk](http://www.freedom-leisure.co.uk)

**To find out more or book a presentation ring Maggie on 0845 603 7737, or visit the website [www.heyday.org.uk](http://www.heyday.org.uk)**

# OUR FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

## LOCAL MP WELCOMES NEW OLDER PEOPLE'S FORUM

Wealden MP Charles Hendry spoke about the problems facing older people in East Sussex when he addressed the first Annual General Meeting of the Wealden Senior Citizens' Partnership, which was held at the end of September. He referred specifically to the closure of hospital departments, the shortage of NHS dentists, the deterioration in public transport in rural areas, the closure of Post Offices and the lack of secure, affordable housing, as well as the fact that adult education is becoming less accessible to older people, with courses closing down or becoming exorbitantly expensive. He welcomed the establishment of this and other forums for older people, which he saw as providing an opportunity for older people to join forces in order to influence the decision-making process at local and Government level.

The Mayor of Uckfield, Councillor Louise Eastwood, had also been invited to attend. She welcomed us to Uckfield and said she fully supported what the forums are trying to do.

The meeting had been opened by the Chairman, Hanno Fry, who spoke about the forum's achievements so far in holding monthly committee meetings and a public meeting, publishing a quarterly Newsletter, setting up a website, and attending many meetings on issues of concern to older people, as well as assisting with the launch of other forums for older people in East Sussex. Plans to set up a taxi service for those unable to use public transport have been initiated.

Another speaker was Diane Parr, the retiring Director of Age Concern East Sussex, who has been involved with the setting up of the older people's forums from the start and said that the strength of these voluntary organisations is that they are run by older people themselves, but that many more people aged 50+ need to become involved in order for the groups to have the maximum impact.

**YOU** can help us increase our membership by encouraging your friends and acquaintances, and particularly anyone you know who is housebound, to put their names on our mailing list. Membership is free, and need involve you no more than giving us your name and address, although if you would like to be more actively involved we would be delighted to hear from you. Plans for the coming year include setting up **Special Interest Groups** to study specific issues, co-opting others not at present on the main committee. Please indicate overleaf if you would be prepared to join a group with a particular interest in **Transport and Traffic**, or **Health Social Care and Wellbeing** or could help us with **Communication and Publicity**. Fill in the slip at the bottom of page 4 to let us know if you would like to take part.

A full transcript of the proceedings at the AGM can be viewed on our website, [www.wealden-scp.org.uk](http://www.wealden-scp.org.uk)

## GET A GRANT TO IMPROVE YOUR HOME

There are a range of grants and offers available to help you implement energy saving measures in your home.

Grants for loft and cavity wall insulation are available to all owner-occupied and privately rented households regardless of age, income, or who supplies your fuel.

If you are over 60, own your own home and are in receipt of an income-related benefit, you could receive a Home Repair Assistance Grant of up to £5,000 to undertake repairs, adaptations, or improve the energy efficiency of your property.

If you are in receipt of an income or disability related benefit and own or privately rent your property, you could be eligible for a grant of up to £2,700 (£4,000 for oil-fired systems) under the Government's Warm Front Scheme, which provides a package of energy efficiency measures including insulation, draught-proofing and heating improvements.

**For impartial help and advice on energy efficiency grants contact Wealden District Council's Energy Efficiency Hotline on 01323 443321.**

## WASTE COLLECTION

We are very interested when we hear of issues of particular concern to older people. One which was raised with us recently was the question of the disposal of old fridges.

At one time Wealden District Council collected these free of charge: however they now make a charge of £18.50.

Fridges can be taken to the household waste site free of charge, but this may be impossible for an older person to manage, especially those of us in rural communities. The charge seems high, considering the dangers of CFC gases, particularly for those on low incomes.

Eastbourne District Council will collect senior citizens' bulky waste free of charge - could not Wealden do the same? And what about the problems many older people experience when having to move a heavy bin to the front of their house - could not more help be given to older and disabled people?

If enough people raise these issues with their own District Councillor, perhaps we can bring about a change.

## DO YOU USE AN ELECTRIC BLANKET?

### How long is it since you had it checked for electrical safety?

Wealden District Council recently spent a week offering this service in 10 venues across Wealden. Nearly 400 blankets were tested with a shuddering 48% failure rate.

It is unfortunately too late for you to take advantage of this free service this year. However, if you have any doubts at all about the safety of this or any other electrical appliance in your home, we urge you to contact your local electrician and ask him to set your mind at rest.

## ANCHOR STAYING PUT HANDY PERSON SCHEME

This scheme operates throughout the Wealden & Lewes Local Authority Districts and is aimed at helping older or vulnerable people to stay living at home by doing small repairs or adaptations to their homes. The scheme is funded by both Local Authorities and by many of the town and parish councils.

Anchor ensure that staff have been checked to an enhanced level by the police so that you can feel confident in inviting them into your home. They will show you identification when they visit and will discuss the job you are considering and give advice free of charge.

The scheme covers many types of work and now can include gardening and decorating, so do contact them to find out whether something can be done to help you.

The scheme is open to anyone who is older or vulnerable, but a different amount is charged for people who are receiving means tested benefits. You can be helped regardless of whether you own your home or rent it and whatever your income is. In some cases the work can be done free of charge, please ask for information.

The telephone number is 01323 442556 and Mary Elmer, the friendly Administrator, can give you more information about how Anchor can help you.



## WEALDEN FEDERATION OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

We would like to express our gratitude to WFVO for the help they gave us, both in setting up this Older People's Forum and in sending out our earlier newsletters. Sadly, WFVO closed down at the end of September, but we are hoping that the support that they provided for voluntary organisations will continue in some form.

## CONTACT US

We would love to hear from you if any of the issues in this newsletter interest or affect you. Please write to us, care of 5 Rectory Field, Hartfield, East Sussex TN7 4JE, or email a committee member via our website, [www.wealden-scp.org](http://www.wealden-scp.org)

We particularly want to hear from you if you would like to receive our newsletter on a regular basis. Please help us to increase our membership and ensure the continuation of our grant from County.

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**Please complete and return this slip if you would like to become a member of the Wealden Senior Citizens' Partnership and receive future editions of the Newsletter.**

NAME.....TEL.NO.....

ADDRESS.....POSTCODE.....

E-MAIL ADDRESS.....

Please include my name on the mailing list for the Wealden Senior Citizens' Partnership, and keep me informed of future events.

I would like to join the following special interest group (see page 3).....

**Return this slip to: Linda Graham, 5 Rectory Field, Hartfield, East Sussex, TN7 4JE,  
Email: [linda\\_graham@ntlworld.com](mailto:linda_graham@ntlworld.com)**