



GREY MATTERS

UK OLDER PEOPLE'S DAY 2010 - FULL OF LIFE

Full of Life is a celebration of the opportunities, achievements, and aspirations of older people and their contribution to our society and economy.

People are living longer. By 2020, half the population of the UK will be aged 50 or over and this will bring fundamental changes to the nature of society. This is a long-term challenge that will need the support of everyone. Together, we need to change attitudes about ageing and older people, and do more to value the contribution that older people make.



Under the Full of Life banner, the government and other supporting groups are arranging a variety of activities. The main event is UK Older People's Day, which will take place on 1 October to coincide with the UN International Day for Older People. The theme for 2010 is 'Getting and Staying Active in Later Life'.

As in previous years, we will be combining Full of Life activities with our Annual General Meeting, to be held on Monday, September 27th in Heathfield Community Centre. During the morning, from 10am, and the afternoon, from 2pm, we will offer a range of taster sessions of alternative therapies and healthy activities. There will also be a **free buffet lunch**, during which we hold our AGM, and **free tea and cakes** at the end of the afternoon session at 4pm.

We look forward to seeing you on this occasion. Please let us know you are coming by completing and returning the reply slip on page 4, or by ringing Carol Hodge on 01825 762934 or carolhodge@tiscali.co.uk Transport can be arranged - please ask.

ACTIVE 4 LIFE



As part of Age UK's Fit as a Fiddle programme, Wealden District Council is currently running a programme of sessions of movement to music, run by a qualified and experienced teacher, which are being held in sheltered housing schemes all over the district. Movements are both chair based and standing depending on your ability - you work at your own level. The details are as follows:

Uckfield, Grants Hill House	Mondays, July 12, September 13, October 11, November 8:	2:30-3:30pm
Crowborough, Rumsey Court	Thursdays, July 15, September 18, October 14, November 11:	10am-11am
Hailsham, Elizabeth Court	Mondays, July 12, September 20, October 18, November 15:	10am-11am
Polegate, Joan Hughes House	Thursdays, July 22, September 30, October 26, November 25:	2:30-3:30pm
Forest Row, Evelyn Clark House	Thursdays, July 8, October 7, November 4, December 2: (also Monday 19th)	2:30-3:30pm

**If you would like more information, please contact Zoe Clarke on:
Tel: 01323 443302 Email: zoe.clarke@wealden.gov.uk**

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

ESSA, the East Sussex Seniors' Association, the umbrella organisation for all the seniors' forums in East Sussex, was recently awarded a grant to fund a workshop to explore ways of reaching seldom heard and under-represented older people throughout the county.

One idea that came out of our own participation in this workshop was to approach Talking Newspapers in Heathfield with the suggestion that they include Grey Matters in their list of recorded publications. They have agreed to do this if we are able to identify enough blind and partially sighted older people in Wealden who would be interested.

We would therefore love to hear from you if you know of anyone who falls into this category. Please contact a member of the committee (see contact details on page 4).



HEALTH MATTERS



PROSTATE CANCER 'FALSE POSITIVES'

One in eight men tested for prostate cancer will be 'positive' when they do not have the disease, research shows. Screening with prostate specific antigen (PSA) is not routinely offered in the UK, although men can request a PSA test via their GP. A randomised study of screening for prostate cancer in Finland shows that for every eight men screened one ended up with a false positive result. This can mean that patients undergo invasive tests such as biopsy as well as potentially unnecessary treatment. For this reason it is important that men in their 50s and 60s talk to their doctor about the pros and cons of having a PSA test and only have the test if they feel it is right for them.

HAPPY FEET

Many of us don't take even basic care of our feet, but if we treat them well they'll help us retain a spring in our step for years to come. For people over 60 foot care becomes even more important. Loss of movement and flexibility in the foot joints is very common.

Symptoms of conditions such as some forms of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis can be alleviated through taking simple measures such as seeking treatment for foot pain as early as possible and protecting your feet by wearing suitable footwear.

To keep your toes in tip-top health, wash them properly every day and dry them, including between the toes, and use a moisturising cream.

If you find it difficult to reach your feet to cut your toenails, have them cut by a podiatrist and use an emery board afterwards. Alternatively, don't be embarrassed to seek the help of friends and family.

Further advice is available on the following website: www.feetforlife.org

SHINGLES VACCINE PLAN FOR OVER 70s



Millions of people aged 70-79 could be vaccinated against shingles for the first time. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), an independent expert advisory committee that gives advice to the government on matters relating to prevention of communicable diseases through immunisation, has recommended that the vaccine should be offered to this age group provided that a licensed vaccine is available at a cost-effective price. The statement also suggests that any such vaccination will only be available for people aged 70 to 79 years old.

Shingles affects around 250,000 people in the UK every year. It is caused by the re-activation of the chickenpox virus that an individual caught, usually as a child. It causes a painful rash of blisters, which can last for many weeks or months. Although treatable with antiviral drugs, shingles can be extremely debilitating and sufferers may be hospitalised with many suffering chronic pain lasting months. Anyone who has had chickenpox could develop shingles, although it is more common in people over 60 years old.

Shingles tends to be more serious the older people get, and about a quarter of adults will get shingles at some point in their life.

The risk of shingles increases with age, and while it unclear what triggers a reactivation of infection, it is thought to be due to compromised immunity. Possible reasons for a weakened immune system can be the use of certain medications, illness, malnutrition or because of the natural decline in immunity that can accompany increasing age.

The JCVI will release a full statement and recommendations to government about the scope of a universal vaccination programme in this country.

DRIVING WITH DEMENTIA

Driving can be hugely important to a person's sense of independence and well being. In isolated communities, particularly in rural areas, it can seem essential. But every driver has a legal responsibility to inform the DVLA if their health alters significantly. If you don't, you may be subject to a fine and your car insurance may be invalid. Many medical conditions can make people unfit to drive and one such condition is dementia.

The early stages of unsafe driving may include: forgetting to put the headlights on; slow response times; getting involved in minor accidents, and getting lost on a previously familiar routes. If you notice signs like these in yourself or someone you care about, it's best to see a doctor.

The DVLA will not automatically stop you driving if you have dementia, but you may be offered a special driving assessment which will determine if you are safe on the roads. With the right support and advice many people continue driving for months or years with their diagnosis of dementia.

You can contact the DVLA on 0870 600 0301, check information online at www.direct.gov.uk/motoring, or write to: Drivers Medical Group, DVLA, Swansea SA99 1TU

Visit our website: www.wealden-scp.org

SUPPORTING PEOPLE

During the last year the County Council has talked to many people in sheltered housing to find out what they want from housing support services for older people. The findings from the consultation were published in October 2009. Here are a few of the responses the County Council has made to those findings:

Some people said that they value an on-site presence in sheltered housing.

It has been agreed that Supporting People can continue to fund an on-site presence in sheltered housing where it currently exists.

Others, however, felt that they don't always want one-to-one support sessions in sheltered housing.

Sheltered housing services will therefore be improved so that they offer a flexible housing support service that includes communal activities as well as one-to-one support sessions.

Some said they would like some sheltered housing lounges to be used for information and advice giving sessions.

Sheltered housing providers will be encouraged, where this is appropriate, to take part in activities held in sheltered housing schemes. This could include information and advice giving sessions.

Help was requested with managing finances, particularly after bereavement.

Flexible visiting support will in future be provided across the county to offer advice to people at times when they need it most - such as after bereavement.

It was clear that people want advice on how to move house and downsize.

The County Older People's Housing and Support Group has set up a housing information and advice group to look at what housing information and advice services are available for older people at the moment, and what the gaps are. The group will establish whether a housing options service is needed and consider how to provide it.

Many people want rural issues to be better understood.

There will be an initiative to recognise and understand the specific needs of people living in rural areas when changing existing services or planning and setting up new ones.

You can read the full response to the consultation findings on our website: www.wealden-scp.org.

'LIVING LONGER, LIVING WELL'

The County Council wants your views on plans for the next five years for adults in later life and their carers as set out in a draft strategy entitled 'Living longer, living well'.

The document sets out how organisations around the county plan to improve health, social care and housing support services over the next five years. The organisations involved are East Sussex County Council's Adult Social Care; NHS East Sussex PCTs; East Sussex Hospital Trust; and Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust Partners.

The draft strategy 'Living longer, living well' was produced as the result of talking regularly to adults in later life and their carers over the past three years and sets out how these organisations intend to develop and improve services. They want to hear your views and comments so that they can further develop and improve the strategy.

If you would like your own views to be included you can download the strategy and a questionnaire from our website: www.wealden-scp.org or from www.eastsussex.gov.uk/haveyoursay or alternatively send an email to the following address: stephen.stamp@eastsussex.gov.uk. If you don't use the internet you can request printed copies from the Strategic Commissioning Team on 01273 481 565.

Completed questionnaires must be returned by 31st August 2010.

The results of the consultation on the draft strategy, and the changes that will be made as a result, will be published in December 2010, and we will hope to put a summary in Grey Matters soon afterwards.

If you have any questions about the draft strategy or the consultation please contact: Susan Moate, PA to Barry Atkins, Head of Strategy Commissioning
Email: susan.moate@eastsussex.gov.uk

A FORUM FOR WHEELCHAIR USERS IN EAST SUSSEX

Only wheelchair users and their carers can fully understand that a malfunctioning wheelchair or lack of a wheelchair at all is just as disabling as any physical impairment. Without our wheelchairs we cannot have a normal life or take our proper place in the community. We read of initiatives to improve the lives of disabled people but we know that we have no chance at all unless they are supported by a well resourced efficient wheelchair service. **You can now share views and concerns through this forum sponsored by the East Sussex LINK - YOUR VOICE FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE IN EAST SUSSEX**

The East Sussex LINK is also conducting a review of the East Sussex Wheelchair Service and service users are invited to take part by answering questionnaires, giving interviews and joining the LINK Wheelchair Users Forum where the current eligibility criteria is posted awaiting suggestions for change. To take part just send an email to wheelchairs@thecountylink.net or contact East Sussex LINK, 1 Faraday Close, Eastbourne BN22 9BH with a contact postal address and telephone number.

COMMITTEE CONTACT DETAILS

Ivy Elsey (Chair, ESSA Rep, Health & Social Care SIG*)
John Collins (Age Concern Rep)
Jan Cooper (Treasurer & ESSA Rep)
Wendy Downing (Falls Prevention Advisor)
Linda Graham (Secretary & Transport SIG*)
Sheila Guest (Sheltered Housing Rep)
Carol Hodge (Events Organiser)
John & Rosemary Jones (Community Network Reps)



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*SIG = Special Interest Group

GAS SAFETY

If you use gas in your home, follow these tips and keep yourself safe as well as warm.

- If you smell gas, call the gas emergency number on 0800 111 999.
- If you have a gas boiler, do you regularly check that the pilot light is burning?
- If you find it has gone out, there should be instructions on the boiler for how to relight it. If you cannot relight it yourself, call a heating engineer out. You can find a qualified one in your area on the National Association of Professional Inspectors and Testers website www.napit.org.uk, or call them on 0870 444 1392.



Do you have a carbon monoxide detector?

- Carbon monoxide is known as a 'silent killer' because you can't see, taste or smell it.
- Heaters that burn gas, coal, oil or wood can give off poisonous carbon monoxide if they are not working properly. Look for a detector bearing the Kite mark and European Standard number BS EN 50291.
- Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can be similar to cold, flu or food poisoning symptoms – headache, feeling sick, stomach ache, dizziness, sore throat and dry cough. Unlike flu, it doesn't cause a high temperature. More severe poisoning can lead to a fast and irregular heart beat, hyperventilating, confusion, drowsiness and breathing difficulties.
- If you suspect carbon monoxide is present, call Transco on 0800 111 999 or, if you have solid fuel heating, call a solid fuel engineer. Contact the Solid Fuel Association for a list of members on 0845 601 4406.

Age UK's Home Safety Checker leaflet will help you identify and resolve any possible safety risks, helping prevent accidents around the home. See www.ageconcern.org.uk/information or ring 0800 00 99 66

ELECTRIC BLANKET TESTING

Free electric blanket testing returns to Wealden in the Autumn during the week beginning 11th October. Recent figures from the Department of Trade and Industry show that nearly 200 fires a year in the UK are associated with electric blankets. 99% of these fires were caused by blankets over 10 years old and led to 100 people being severely injured.



Look out for posters in your area nearer the time, and if you own an electric blanket, make sure you take it along for testing to your nearest venue. For further information, please contact Zoe Clarke on:

Tel: 01323 443302 Email: zoe.clarke@wealden.gov.uk

IF YOU HAVE RECEIVED THIS NEWSLETTER IN THE POST, WE REGARD YOU AS A MEMBER! IF YOU HAVE PICKED IT UP AND WOULD LIKE TO GO ON OUR MAILING LIST, PLEASE LET US KNOW BY COMPLETING AND RETURNING THIS REPLY SLIP. YOU CAN ALSO ASK US TO REMOVE YOUR NAME FROM OUR LIST. WE PROMISE NEVER TO PASS YOUR DETAILS ON TO ANY OTHER ORGANISATION.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

TELEPHONE/E-MAIL.....

PLEASE ADD THIS NAME TO/REMOVE THIS NAME FROM THE MAILING LIST (delete as appropriate)
PLEASE RESERVE PLACE(S) AT THE WSCP A.G.M ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27th

Detach and return this slip to the Secretary: Linda Graham, Wealden Senior Citizens' Partnership,
5 Rectory Field, Hartfield, TN7 4JE. Enquiries to: 01892 770487, e-mail: lindagraham@wealden-scp.org