

# GREY MATTERS

## A REASON TO CELEBRATE?

This is the 50<sup>th</sup> edition of "Grey Matters"! We little thought, when our first newsletter was published in 2006, that we would be producing Volume 50 14½ years later for a membership of over 600, nor did we envisage the strange world in which we would be living in 2020.

Back in 2006, the hot topics that had been raised at our launch the previous year were: the lack of transport in rural areas; the high cost of adult education; the problems of long term care for the elderly; the high level of Council Tax rises compared with the level of state pensions; and the dangers posed by poorly lit and badly maintained footpaths in rural areas - and there was a brief reference to concerns about bird 'flu!

Now our news and concerns are dominated by the Coronavirus pandemic, which is affecting us in ways we could never have imagined, to the extent that when we reach the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our launch in October this year, it is possible that we will not be able to celebrate as we would like to.

We are sorry that the events that we had planned for May and July this year have had to go on hold, and since we have already paid deposits we are very much hoping that we will be able to rearrange them for 2021. Apologies to all those who had made a provisional booking for the cream tea at Holy Cross Priory this month, but it has become clear that despite the relaxing of social distancing rules, events involving a large number of attendees from across Wealden, many aged over 70, are going to be off the agenda, certainly for the next couple of months.

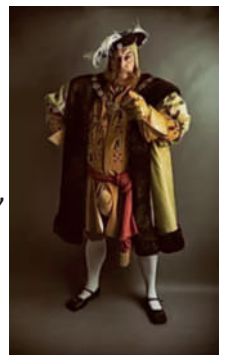
Plans for what used to be known as Older People's Day - a large number of events celebrating older people which take place every year throughout September and October - have had to be drastically changed. This year it has been re-branded as an Ageing Well Festival, but following guidance and the advice from Public Health not to encourage any physical events due to the Covid-19 risk, particularly with an older age group, this will now be a 'virtual' Festival, the decision having been made that for health and safety reasons and social distancing concerns that an online celebration is the only way forward. It will be a very different Ageing Well festival from the one originally planned: however, it is important to hold something despite these challenging circumstances, and it also provides an opportunity to do something innovative. We hope to send out a booklet next month, showing how to get involved.

In spite of this, we ourselves have not yet cancelled bookings already in hand for events in September and October, in the hope that there might be an easing of the pandemic by then.

On Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> September we had planned a high tea at the Belmont Centre in Uckfield, with an entertaining speaker, Tony Harris (aka King Henry VIII), and on Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> October a roast lunch at the Crockstead Farm Hotel, Halland, followed by entertainment by Bertie Pearce, a member of the Magic Circle, each at a subsidised cost of £5 per head.

It is impossible to say for sure at the moment whether these two events can definitely go ahead, given the current changing guidance on lockdown restrictions. It may well be that many of our members will not feel ready to attend; it is also possible that we might have to limit the numbers, with suitable social distancing and hygiene procedures in place.

We would love to hear from you if you would like to be kept informed about these events. Please complete and return the reply slip on page 4, ring Linda on 01892 770487 or email [wealden.scp@gmail.com](mailto:wealden.scp@gmail.com)



Healthwatch East Sussex, the local independent Watchdog for people who use health and care services in East Sussex, ran a public survey during May and early June 2020 to capture local views and experiences of life under lockdown. 2,179 people responded to the survey, including 970 children and young people aged 11 –18 years. Over 1,200 people took part in our adult survey, with the highest number of responses received from women and people aged 50 or over.

Early findings from the responses show:

- One in ten respondents were 'Having some difficulty coping' or 'not coping at all well'
- Approximately half the respondents had experienced changes or disruption to health services or treatment. A quarter of these identified it had no impact, but a fifth indicated it had a significant impact.
- Approximately one in five respondents had used a video link or mobile app to access health or care services. Of these, four out of ten would be happy to use it as their main means of accessing services in the future.
- Nearly half of those responding felt 'unsure' or 'not confident at all' about accessing health or care services for any treatment or worries that are not Covid-19 related.
- A third of respondents had found it difficult to get clear information and advice about was Government guidance on actions to take on Covid-19.

People didn't hold back in sharing their experiences with over 10,000 individual comments made in the completed surveys received. This rich source of information about how East Sussex residents experience the lockdown in June is now being analysed.

Healthwatch East Sussex reached out to a range of individuals and groups to ensure that a wide variety of adults and children had the opportunity to share their views. Healthwatch sought the views of people shielded under the government scheme receiving food parcels, older people, homeless people and those with multiple and complex needs who make up some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

John Routledge, Director of Healthwatch East Sussex, commented:

*"We are delighted and amazed by the overwhelming public response to our life under lockdown survey. Our priority now is to make sure that we show our gratitude to the people of East Sussex by ensuring their views are reflected in recovery and restoration plans now being implemented by health and social care leaders in the county.*

*The mammoth task of analysing all the rich intelligence we have received has begun in earnest and will keep our brilliant staff and volunteers very busy for the next few weeks!"*

Healthwatch East Sussex will release more findings over the coming weeks, including:

- More detailed analysis of what people told us
- Case studies of Life in Lockdown
- How children and young people responded to the crisis

In addition, Healthwatch will be publishing:

- Our Care Home Story –a chronological account of how our care homes experienced the crisis; and
- The impact of the virus on people with multiple complex needs

Taken together, these findings will be the most comprehensive Healthwatch reporting of public experiences of health and care since being established in 2013.



A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers

**0800 804 8044**

Are you in need of some daily hope during this lockdown?

We have a new FREE telephone line for you to ring to hear comforting hymns, daily prayers and reflections.

 THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  Faith in Later Life  CONNECTIONS



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Friends Against  
**SCAMS**

#ScamAware

Are you worried that you, or someone you know, may lose money to scam and nuisance calls on the landline? Say no to these calls by applying for a free call blocker for yourself, or passing on this link to others who would benefit: [www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/callblocker](http://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/callblocker) #ScamAware#CallBlocker

## LIVING SAFELY AND WELL AT HOME

### A few practical suggestions to make your home safer and healthier

As we get older the condition of our home becomes increasingly important to our health. Many common health problems, such as heart disease, respiratory infections, stroke and arthritis, may be caused or made worse by the condition of our homes, and risk of falls increases with age. The two most common health hazards for older people are falls in the home and living in a cold home. Here are a few suggestions on improvements you can make.

**FALLS** - Around half of all falls happen at home, bringing the risk of hip and other fractures

One in three people over the age of 65, and one in two over 80, fall each year. To make you home safer, consider: Installing a second handrail on staircases - Putting in brighter lighting, especially on stairs and by steps - Having grab rails put in next to steps, toilet, bath and/or shower - Repairing loose or uneven stairs, securing carpets, removing loose rugs - Removing things you can trip over e.g. trailing electrical cables - Having a touch-sensitive lamp by the bed to avoid reaching for switches in the dark - Keeping warm and active (being cold increases risk of falls).

As well as making the home safer, the risk of falling is reduced if you:

Exercise to maintain muscle tone - Have regular medication reviews - Get your vision checked.

Your local council or GP may be able to put you in touch with a local 'Falls Prevention' service.

**COLD HOMES** - Many medical conditions may be caused or made worse by living in a cold home

According to the NHS between 18° C and 21° C is a healthy room temperature. Blood pressure increases when temperatures fall below 12° C, increasing the risk of heart attack or stroke. A cold home can be caused by poor insulation, an inadequate or inefficient heating system, or not turning on heating due to worry about cost. Check that you are on the best possible tariff by visiting [MoneySavingExpert.com](http://MoneySavingExpert.com) or [which.co.uk/energy-advice](http://which.co.uk/energy-advice) or [energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://energysavingtrust.org.uk) East Sussex County Council provides a free Warm Home Check Service for people who own or privately rent their property and are on certain qualifying benefits. You can text "WARM" with your name and postcode to 81400 to enquire.

**DAMP, CONDENSATION AND MOULD GROWTH** can also make certain health conditions worse

The main causes of damp are: Penetrating damp, often caused by blockage of gutters or down pipes - Rising damp, usually caused by lack of an effective damp proof course - Plumbing defects such as minor leaks.

Condensation is usually caused by: An excess of water vapour in the air - Poorly insulated walls - inadequate home heating. You should consider avoiding drying wet washing in poorly ventilated areas, covering pans when cooking, avoiding using calor gas or paraffin, increasing ventilation, improving insulation and maintaining a slightly higher background temperature.

Wealden District Council has a key role in helping elderly, disabled and vulnerable residents to adapt, improve and maintain their homes. Home improvement loans are available for property owners to bring non decent dwellings up to the decent homes standard and/or to undertake energy efficiency improvements. They can also put you in touch with Home Improvement Agency services, also known as HIAs, Care & Repair or staying put schemes.



### DO YOU KNOW ABOUT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE?

Our Facebook page is looked after by a former committee member, who regularly posts information which members would find helpful and interesting in between issues of Grey Matters.

If you are signed up to Facebook (we know that some of us are, if only to keep up to date with what our children are up to!), do follow our page and give us a "like".

Visit our website: [www.wealden-scp.org](http://www.wealden-scp.org) and sign up on our FaceBook Page

## PENSION CREDIT

Pension Credit can top up your low income if you've reached the qualifying age. Lots of people who qualify for it aren't claiming it, so it's worth checking if you're eligible.

Reasons to claim Pension Credit

- You could be getting money each year
- Your rent covered and Council Tax reduced
- Free Sight Tests and NHS Dental Care
- Extra money when it's cold
- Help towards the cost of new glasses
- Free travel to hospital appointments
- Free Television Licence
- And extra money if you're a carer or have a disability



advice and support for older age  
**Independent  
Age**

### Who can claim it?

There are two types of Pension Credit: Guarantee Credit and Savings Credit.

To be eligible for Guarantee Pension Credit, you must be State Pension age. You can check when you'll reach State Pension age on Gov.uk.

Your weekly income, including assumed income from savings and capital over £10,000, will need to be below the minimum amount the government says you need to live on: usually £173.75 for a single person or £265.20 for a couple. This amount could be higher if you're disabled, a carer or have certain housing costs.

You can only get Savings Credit if you reached State Pension age before 6 April 2016, or you have a partner who reached State Pension age before this date and was already receiving it.

If you're eligible for Savings Pension Credit, you or your partner must have reached State Pension age and have qualifying income of at least £150.47 a week for a single person or £239.17 a week for a couple.

### How much can I get?

Guarantee Credit tops up your weekly income to:

- £173.75 for a single person
- £265.20 for a couple (married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting).

You might be able to get more than this if you're severely disabled, a carer, or have certain housing costs.

Independent Age have kindly supplied us with copies of a booklet giving the latest information about Pension Credit. Your personal copy is enclosed. If it does not apply to you, you may have a friend, family member or neighbour who would be interested, so please pass it on.

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## PLEASE USE THIS REPLY SLIP TO GET IN TOUCH WITH US

IF YOU HAVE RECEIVED THIS NEWSLETTER IN THE POST OR BY EMAIL, YOU ARE ALREADY A MEMBER! IF YOU HAVE PICKED IT UP AND WOULD LIKE TO JOIN, PLEASE RETURN THIS TEAR-OFF SLIP TO LET US KNOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE IT ON A REGULAR BASIS. YOU CAN ALSO USE THIS SLIP TO REMOVE YOUR NAME FROM OUR CIRCULATION LIST.

\*\*\*\*\*PLEASE NOTE WE WILL NEVER PASS YOUR DETAILS ON TO A THIRD PARTY\*\*\*\*\*

YOUR NAME.....TELEPHONE/EMAIL.....

YOUR ADDRESS.....

PLEASE ADD MY NAME TO/REMOVE MY NAME FROM THE MAILING LIST

I/WE WOULD LIKE TO BE KEPT INFORMED ABOUT POSSIBLE FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Detach and return this slip to: Linda Graham, Membership Secretary, 5 Rectory Field,  
Hartfield TN7 4JE Tel: 01892 770487, Email: wealden.scp@gmail.com

If you are happy to receive this newsletter electronically in future and save on postage,  
send us an email!