

# Forum News



January 2003

The Newsletter of Enfield Over 50s Forum

**.... A New  
Year with New  
Horizons for  
the FORUM ....**

## FORUM Events

*January 28 Tuesday @ 10.30am*

**PENSIONS and HEALTH**

*February 25 Tuesday @ 10.30am*

**ENFIELD'S NEW WARD POLICE OFFICERS**

*March 25 Tuesday @ 10.30am*

**THE WORK OF ENFIELD'S LIBRARIES**

*April 29 Tuesday @ 10.30am*

**FORUM AGM**



## Chair's Report to Enfield Over 50s

Thank you for your support throughout 2002. But are you thinking so where did the last year go ? For here we are now in 2003, planning and working to make the Forum an even more representative and influential voice in raising the quality of life of older people in the Borough.

We will again be meeting on the last Tuesday of every month except December at the Civic Centre, Silver Street, Enfield starting at 10.30 am unless you are otherwise notified.

The first meeting of the New Year on 28 JANUARY will have two speakers on PENSIONS and HEALTH. Our two speakers will come from the new Pensions Service which has replaced the old Benefits Agency and from the Enfield Primary Care Trust. They will discuss What the Pensions Service is doing to make sure that everyone entitled to a pension gets what is due to them *and* the New Single Assessment process for older People in Enfield which will provide better information and coordination between the various health and social services so that the right facilities can be made available at the right time. The two speakers will be Charlie Clerke, manager of the Single Assessment for Older People Project and Zihniye Mehmed, Liaison Manager, Pensions Service.

For our meeting on Tuesday 25 February our guest speaker will be Inspector Ian Clark, the deputy Police Borough Liaison Officer, discussing the work of the new ward police officers, while on Tuesday 25 March we will have Stephanie Lafferty, Enfield Council's Community Services Librarian to review the work of Enfield's Libraries.

With your support 2003 can be an even better year for the Forum and make it a real vehicle for ensuring that the voices of the over 50s are heard and can improve the lot of Enfield's older people.

*Best wishes for the New Year*

*Monty Meth*

## THE FREEDOM PASS IS SAFE

A great deal of unnecessary fear and worry was caused by the press reporting the recent findings of the Commission for Integrated Transport, which suggested that places without the free bus pass for pensioners should consider introducing a broader scheme to include people who are unemployed or disabled. **THEY DID NOT RECOMMEND THAT LONDON SHOULD LOSE ITS FREEDOM PASS.**

Indeed, Prime Minister Tony Blair, speaking in the House of Commons on 18 December, gave a categorical assurance that there was no intention to change the Freedom Pass. Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, has also said that he totally opposes any proposals to abolish free public transport for pensioners. As any move to change the present Freedom Pass would have to come from the Mayor and the GLA we believe that this issue is a "dead duck". That does not mean we can drop our guard. We shall be vigilant so that any attempt to curb the Freedom Pass will be vigorously opposed. Having said that, many people feel there is a case for sharing some of the benefits pensioners now enjoy such as the £200 per household winter fuel allowance with deserving disabled people.

Far from losing the Freedom Pass, it will actually be extended to all Londoners at the age of 60 from this April and the London Mayor now wants to offer half price travel for under-18s. At the top of the National Pensioners Convention agenda is the demand for free nationwide bus travel for pensioners.

In Wales they have free bus travel at any time across their country and Northern Ireland also has the same concession. The NPC has now clarified the position in Scotland where there is free bus travel but only within local authority boundaries - not across the country as was erroneously said at the November Forum meeting.

### Useful web sites

Enfield Council  
Help the Aged  
Age Concern

[www.enfield.gov.uk](http://www.enfield.gov.uk)  
[www.helptheaged.co.uk](http://www.helptheaged.co.uk)  
[www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk)

## ENFIELD COUNCIL SCRUTINY PANELS

We badly need help in getting Forum members to attend meetings of the important Scrutiny Panels set up by the Council to discuss its various policies which can be of vital concern to older people.

Whereas previously there was one scrutiny panel specially concerned with older people covering such matters as social services, transport and housing on which Jean Calvert represented the Forum, now issues affecting older people can arise at any of the six scrutiny panels covering the main council services.

It is quite impossible for the Forum's officers to attend all the panels, but we ought to be able to cover them if Forum members can help to spread the work by attending one or other of them.

All meetings are held at the Civic Centre, usually starting at 7pm or 7.30pm and any help you can give in going along to the following meetings, perhaps speaking up for older people, and reporting back to the Forum will be a great help.

*14 January 7 pm Tuesday*

**Social Services Scrutiny Panel**

*23 January 7.30 pm Thursday*

**Environment, Parks and Amenities Scrutiny Panel**

*28 January 7.00 pm Tuesday*

**Health Scrutiny Panel**

*29 January 7.00 pm Wednesday*

**Special Projects Panel**

## REMEMBER TO PUT THE FORUM DATES IN YOUR DIARY!

OUR FIRST 2003 MEETING  
TUESDAY 28 JANUARY 10.30 am.  
Civic Centre, Silver Street, Enfield.

*We'll be talking about*

**Pensions and Health**

## **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS POVERTY IN LONDON**

London Divided, a new report commissioned by London's Mayor into income, inequality and poverty reveals that the capital has the poorest areas in the whole country!

*In Inner London, a staggering 36 per cent of pensioners live in poverty, after housing costs are taken into account, compared with 25 per cent nationally.*

Also 41 per cent of London's children live in poverty and this rises to 53 per cent in Inner London. Rates of poverty for working age adults are also higher than for any other region of Great Britain once housing costs are taken into account, and poverty is highest among ethnic minority groups.

Hackney, Lambeth, Newham, Southwark and Tower Hamlets are the five worst boroughs. LAMPAG, the Lambeth Pensioners Action Group and the Lambeth Pensioners Forum are making moves to respond to this alarming situation, by calling for a joint initiative led by the pensioners' groups in these boroughs. A written report will be given to the next meeting of the NPC London and South East Region. You will be kept posted.

### **RENEW YOUR FORUM MEMBERSHIP**

Letters will be going out next month to all members, visitors and friends of the Forum inviting them to take up their annual membership which will run from April 1 2003 to March 31 2004. This will save a lot of administrative time in sending out letters to people all year round as their membership fee falls due. So please help us to achieve a record membership in 2003 by signing up promptly both as individual members and by getting your friends and Clubs to join.

**The Stronger We Are - The Greater Our  
Influence**

## **SIGN UP TO THE SCRAP IT CAMPAIGN**

Help the Aged has launched a petition to challenge discrimination against older people wherever it is found. The Scrap It campaign calls for:

- Legislation outlawing age discrimination in employment to be extended to cover goods, services and all facilities for older people.
- A Commission to ensure the enforcement of legislation and promote equality for older people.

Copies of the petition which will be presented to Tony Blair on his 50th birthday in May 2003 will be available at the Forum meetings.

## **ROAD SAFETY - YOUR VIEWS REQUIRED**

We plan to follow up the very good discussion we had on road safety in the Borough by conducting a survey on the risk and safety for older pedestrians.

The statistics are alarming. In 2001, 170 people were murdered in London, but 299 people died on the roads. So why don't we hear as much about road safety as about crime? Half of all pedestrian deaths are pensioners although they constitute only 1 in 5 of the population. 90% of casualties occur when older people are crossing roads to and from bus stops, post offices and shops.

While the casualty figures for Enfield are not as bad, there is much room for improvement and we can help bring this about by identifying the blackspots in the Borough and urging the road traffic planners to introduce more traffic calming measures such as "sleeping policemen" (humps), zebra crossings and speed cameras. Should there be more severe penalties for drivers causing accidents, found speeding or using mobile phones while driving? Should there be more periodic tests for drivers - not just for those reaching 70? And do we agree with the Borough Police Commander that her priorities are to get a quick police response to incidents and more police on the ground rather than spending money on more patrol cars attached to the traffic division?

# FORUM CALLS ON PRIMARY CARE TRUST TO HELP THE HARD OF HEARING AND PEOPLE NEEDING CHIROPODY

With a record Government grant of over £800 million to spend over the next three years, Enfield's Primary Care Trust (PCT) should immediately undertake to make the new cutting-edge digital hearing aids available on the NHS and restore 1000 chiropody patients who were removed from NHS treatment.

In a letter to Sally Johnson, the PCT chief executive, the Forum said that over the next three years Enfield PCT will control 75% of the local NHS budget and will receive an increase in funding of £71.2 million, which equals a cash increase of 32.25%.

Having missed out on the first 65 audiology clinics in England issuing digital hearing aids, the Forum urged the PCT to now make £28,000 available and apply immediately for Government funding to cover the remaining cost of

introducing digital hearing aids. The Forum also urged the PCT to provide a chiropody/podiatry service based solely on need in keeping with the principles of the NHS. *"We do not regard the pilot toe-nail cutting service planned in Edmonton and staffed by volunteers as a substitute for an effective chiropody service that will enable older people to maintain their mobility and independence"* said Forum chairman Monty Meth.

The Forum wants to know how many of the 1000 podiatry patients discharged from the NHS have returned because of tissue breakdown infection and ulceration, severe corns and calluses. How many people left the NHS as low risk patients and have since returned as high risk patients and how many have been victims of falls.

## THANKS

The Forum would like to register its sincere thanks to Sainsbury's Supermarkets plc for donating over £150 to cover the cost of our pre-meeting refreshments during last year and also to the Old Enfield Charitable Trust for a £150 donation to cover the cost of publicity printing for the Forum and the Bickerstaffe meeting.

### **Annual General Meeting**

29 April 2003

If you are interested in standing for office or volunteering to be a spokesperson for the Forum on a specific issue or topic your active support would be welcome, so please come forward.

## WANTED: PEOPLE WITH 80th BIRTH- DAYS in 2003

How will you feel about that 25p extra pension you will get on reaching the age of 80? First introduced in 1971, it has never been increased. It wasn't worth much 32 years ago, it is worth a lot less now. And when it came in the 25p was a recognition that the oldest pensioners tended to be the poorest. Now identifying the poorest pensioners is not so simple and people are in any case living longer.

So is there a case for getting rid of the 25p bonus altogether and putting the money saved elsewhere or making the bonus which will now buy you six tea bags or half a doughnut really worthwhile? What do the 80-year-olds think?