

Forum News



July 2003

The Newsletter of Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum



So
what are we
here for?

Chair's Report to Enfield Over 50s

I make no apology for listing the growing number of issues we are being asked to take up on behalf of older people in the Borough. These matters are not solved overnight by writing a letter, having a meeting or signing a petition. They have to be fought for long and hard until we are satisfied that we have done all we can to get a result.

So the more people and Clubs that join our Forum the stronger, more effective, more influential will be our voice in the Borough securing, among other things:

- BETTER deals for older people at our leisure centres
- FAIR charges for homecare provided by the Council's social services
- CHIROPODY Treatment for those who need it
- MAXIMUM payments for those entitled to more than the basic State pension
- GETTING the GLA to drop the proposed £20 six-year council tax surcharge for the 2012 Olympic Games
- RAISE the number and standard of public toilets in the Borough
- Campaign to reduce accidents through falls

So why not come to our Forum meetings, join the Forum yourself, get your club to affiliate and so help make the Forum:

THE VOICE OF OLDER PEOPLE IN ENFIELD

*Come to our meetings or get in touch
with us.*

Monty Meth

Council Backing for Freedom Pass

"Enfield has every intention of supporting retention of the Freedom Pass", says Councillor Michael Rye, Leader of the Council in an important written statement to our Forum.

The statement is crucial because the Freedom Pass is paid for by the 33 London Boroughs and remains in effect until terminated by their UNANIMOUS decision. Changes can, however, be made with the agreement of two thirds of the local authorities.

We are not aware of any proposals to change the free travel scheme for elderly people but just to make sure we are asking every Forum in London to ask their Council leader to give them the same assurance that we have received from Councillor Rye.

FORUM Events

at Enfield Civic Centre
Silver Street 10 am for 10.30 start

Tuesday 24 June

DOORSTEP SELLING & OTHER TRADING SCAMS

Speaker: Tony Allen, Trading Standards Team Leader

Tuesday 29 July

CHALLENGES FACING OLDER PEOPLE

Speaker: Mervyn Eastman: UK director Better Government for Older People

Tuesday 26 August

ENFIELD'S HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN INHERITANCE TAX BRIEFING

Tuesday 23 September

(note not the last Tuesday)

QUESTION TIME WITH ENFIELD'S MPs

Tuesday 28 October

BREAST AND PROSTATE CANCER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Cutting Falls in the Home

Forum Committee member Derek Friggens is working on a simple checklist which can be used by members, carers or people visiting elderly relatives to help cut the number of falls and accidents in the home. His initiative has been welcomed by Enfield Primary Care Trust and they will meet the production cost of the check-list.

According to figures released by the Department of Trade and Industry, Enfield is second only to Brent in having the worst falls figures in London with 21 fatalities, 1500 serious cases and 2000 minor incidents between 1995-97.

“If you add to those figures cases of scalding, electric shock, burns as a result of an accidental fire and so on you can see that we have a situation that affects many people in the borough”, says Derek. “We need to get people thinking about worn carpets, trailing electric cables, wearing ill-fitted footwear, the lack of handrails on staircases and climbing up ladders or on furniture and over-reaching”.

Falls in the home kill more people than road accidents and 80% of people who die from a fall at home are aged over 65. So this is an issue we should all take seriously and see what help we can give people living on their own who are perhaps frail or have arthritis and cannot change a light bulb. This is where:

Age Concern's Handy Person Service Can Help

Minor repairs and small practical tasks can be undertaken for older people - but not painting and decorating, window cleaning or gardening. Charges: £5 for the initial visit and up to one hour's labour and £5 per hour after that plus the cost of materials.

Call Tony Westney on 0208 351 1671 or 1322

Age Equality at Work

Enfield Council's special projects scrutiny panel under its former chairman Councillor Del Goddard deserves congratulations for taking up our suggestion of holding an age diversity Forum on Friday 13 June with the aim of preparing local employers for the planned ending of age discrimination in employment by 2006.

Although too many of our local employers were too busy, too short-sighted or too tired to attend - or perhaps they don't go out on Friday the 13th - they ought to realise that a balanced workforce of older and younger people, free of sex or racial discrimination will be generating more money into the local and national economy which will be good for them.

We took the idea to the Council because we realised that Britain is heading for trouble unless we recognise that people are in general living much longer, but they are often working for fewer years. So they cannot save enough for an extended retirement which can perhaps last for 30 years or more.

We are assured that the Council will follow up the Age Diversity Forum by possibly qualifying to become an AgePositive employer and possibly by getting companies to sign a pledge to “age equality in their workplace by giving an undertaking that they will not discriminate on grounds of age.

There is nothing to stop employers now dropping a fixed retirement age at 60 or 65 and letting people work on if they want to or letting them work flexible hours. A fairer deal for older workers is long overdue. It is better than forcing many of them on to income support when they are fit and healthy and willing to go on contributing to the community.

Let's make pensions work for women

The Forum is supporting the Fawcett Society and Age Concern to campaign for a fairer deal for women in the pensions field.

The aims of the campaign are:

- a system that will guarantee every woman an adequate, independent retirement income.
- to remove the unfair barriers which prevent women from receiving a full basic state pension

and to increase the level of pension so it covers basic costs.

- better opportunities for women to build up higher value company and personal pensions
- To sign up as an individual supporter call: 08457 00 99 66 and ask for more information.

www.fawcettsociety.org.uk

www.ageconcern.org.uk

OUR SWIM CHARGE CHALLENGE

The Leisure Centres Board very briefly considered our complaint on May 21 that Enfield's swimming charges for the over 60s are too high compared with other boroughs. Apparently, they agreed to introduce a £5 for five swims book of tickets - a reduction of 20p per swim if you go after mid-day. We understand the Board intended to consider the matter again on July 2 and we are pressing them to announce a New Deal for the over 60s - or over 50s - at the Fun and Fitness day we are jointly organising with them on Tuesday 2nd September at the Southbury Leisure Centre.

This is how our current swim charges compares with over 60s in other boroughs:

Enfield: £16 for a yearly "stretch" card and then either £1.20, £1.40 or £2.10 to swim depending on day and time.

Islington: 60+ Izz card is free. Swimming is free between 9 am and 4 pm weekdays and anytime at the weekend. £1 at other times.

Hertsmere: 60+ Hertcard is free and you can swim anytime for 90p.

Haringey: 65+ Gold Card is free, swimming free all day, every day.

Waltham Forest: Free leisure card. Swim for 70p 9am-4pm and £1.20 at weekend and all other times.

Redbridge: Free leisure card. Swim for 55p 9am-5pm Monday to Friday and £1.20 at other times.

Wandsworth: £32 for a yearly pass to swim anytime, any day.

Simon Parkinson, the Leisure Centres managing director, has now accepted in a letter to the Forum that the figures they were given by the Council for other boroughs "did not include reference to the discounted charges that some boroughs have introduced for the over 50s/60s".

So if Enfield is to live up to the claims in the Council's latest Best Value publication to be: "first for value for money, efficiency and listening to its customers", we expect nothing less than a matching better deal with the above boroughs.

In addition, we challenge the appropriate decision-makers to tell us how Enfield's inflated swim charges can be reconciled with the Enfield Health Improvement Action Plan which lists among its actions: "to co-ordinate and develop health promotion programmes to increase the quality of life and independence of older people".

This is a battle we are determined to win. We want to keep older people fit, active and healthy to hopefully reduce the pressure on GPs, hospitals and social services. Spending a little money on preventative medicine will benefit everyone.

THANKS NO.1

This Newsletter has been generously funded by the Scarmans Trust Enfield Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chest to whom we express our grateful thanks. We also thank Mr Barry Gramlick, manager of Sainsbury's Supermarket at Winchmore Hill, for partly meeting the cost of refreshments at our Forum meetings.

News Clips

The National Pensioners Convention is planning a mass national lobby of Parliament on Wednesday 10 September on the issue of pensioner income. More details shortly, but please keep the date free.

Walk in Pymmes Park, Edmonton every Friday at 2.30 pm until mid-August.. Meet outside the Visitor Centre. Contact: Christina Lee 0208 373 6339.

Do you need help with toenail cutting or hard skin?. This Age Concern service is available on Fridays from 11.15 - 1.30pm at St George's Church Hall, Hertford Road, Freezywater. Cost £5. But you must book an appointment on Tuesdays between 9am and 1pm on 0208 351 6300 Chris Fagan.

Ruth Winston House, 190 Green Lanes, N13 5UE has a chiropody service on Monday and Thursday between 9am-1pm. Cost £6.50. To make an appointment ring Jean on 0208 886 5346

Enfield is getting an additional 26 Police Community Support Officers in the current financial year to help strengthen local policing deal with anti-social behaviour.

Age Concern Enfield is running a traditional Tinsel and Turkey five day, half board holiday by coach to Lyme Bay, Devon in early November. Cost £169 per person includes two half-day excursions. Details from Lisa MacMurdie 0208 351 2702.

Next Forum Meeting

Tuesday 29 July at the Civic Centre, Silver Street, 10.30am

Speaker: Mervyn Eastman: Director Better Government for Older People project.

Are we winning the battle with local and national government to be heard and heeded?

FAIRER CHARGING FOR HOMECARE SERVICES.....

.....WE'RE WATCHING AND WAITING

We understand that the Council was supposed to implement the new Government policy aimed at fairer charging for homecare and other non-residential social care services last October, which means the scheme is expected to run at a loss of about £240,000 this year.

This means we will have to be extra vigilant in seeing that the 14% of people who will be "significantly affected" by the new higher charges because they have an income or savings that put them in the "ability to pay" bracket do get a fair deal.

This extract from a letter to the Forum sums up the views of many people: "As far as home-care is concerned, I don't object to means-testing, but I think it would be very unfair to base this on savings as well as regular income. Some people chose to spend, others to save, and it seems wrong - very wrong - to penalise the savers".

It does seem odd that at the very time when the Government is planning to reward pensioner-savers with more money through the Pension Credit being launched in October, that the same pensioner-savers should be penalised if they need help at home.

Some 86% of people using these social services will either be charged nothing or will get them at a reduced rate. We are seeking to ensure that the 14% - whom the Council believes can afford to pay

the higher charges - are not being asked to pay more for the services than they actually cost.

We are concerned too that they are not being asked to subsidise those getting free or paying reduced charges and are not subsidising other Council services - or carrying the cost of the current deficit on the "Fairer Charging" scheme.

We think that people being asked to pay up to double what they are now being charged should be given a list of council charges to see if they can get the same service at lower cost elsewhere. We are also concerned about what will happen to those people who feel the new charges are prohibitive. Who is going to see they are properly cared for? Could they end up being hospitalised at greater cost to the community?

And once the new charges have been fixed, we think people should be given an assurance that they will not be raised above the level of inflation which could help to relieve any anxiety about future care costs.

We believe that it is of paramount importance that if people need help they should get it, irrespective of their ability to pay. In our view there is a danger that in endeavouring to "break even" the Council will on the one hand cut the service needs of non-contributors and increase the services and charges of those deemed able to afford to pay.

THANKS NO.2 £55 for RNID

This was the sum raised from the raffle at our very successful AGM. The proceeds were sent to the RNID in appreciation of the help they gave us in the battle to secure digital hearing aids on the NHS.

Brian Dow, joint Head of Campaigns at the RNID, has written to the Forum to express the RNID's "appreciation for your kind donation and your continued support for our campaign to improve the lives of the deaf and the hard of hearing community. We are delighted with the success we have had with the digital hearing aids campaign in England and will continue to work hard to bring about change on the issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing people", he says.

Two important dates for your over 50s diary

Tuesday 2 September - Southbury Road Leisure Centre 10 am - 4pm

Enfield's First Free Fun Health and Fitness, Healthy Eating and Healthy Living Day

The stimulating programme includes discussions on lifestyle, healthy living and eating, gentle exercise activities for you to join in or watch such as aqua-aerobics, short mat bowls, table tennis, badminton, walks, swimming lessons, lunch and entry into a free prize draw.

Friday 31 October 10.30.-3.30 Enfield County School, Enfield Town

The new Pension Credit Explained

Can We Help You Top up Your Pension? Can you help us identify people who should claim, but don't? Who can claim, How to Claim.

Confidential one-to-one advice sessions.