

Forum News



September 2003

The Newsletter of Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum



PARTICIPATION + PARTNERSHIP = PROGRESS

We can now demonstrate convincingly that our strategy of working together in partnership with others is getting results and that on our own the Forum is limited in what it can achieve.

The launch of our home safety audit to reduce falls and accidents in the home could not have been accomplished without the Primary Care Trust and Forum member Derek Friggens working together.

Our drive to get more money in the pockets of hundreds of people entitled to the new Pension Credit cannot be realised without the wholehearted support of the new Pension Service.

And our opposition to the hefty increases in swimming charges for pensioners would have fallen on deaf ears if we had not supported the efforts by the Leisure Services Trust to plan a better deal for the over 60s.

There is a simple lesson here for all of us to learn. It is that by acting separately as individuals and as a single club representing older people we can do little. But combining together we can really become the voice of and for older people in the Borough.

We now have a record membership of over 150 people and 24 clubs so our message to those on the outside is simple: If you want your voice to be heard then join the Forum and campaign with us for, among other things:

- * BETTER deals for older people at our leisure centres
- * CHIROPODY treatment for all who need it
- * MAXIMUM payments for those entitled to more than the basic State pension
- * MORE and better public toilets in the Borough
- * REDUCED accidents through falls and accidents at home.

and there's much, much more, so let's hear from you and remember!

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Monty Meth

Chair

It's Never Too Late to get into Shape

That's the message of the first over 50s free Health and Fitness Fun Day - initiated by the Forum - on Tuesday 2nd September at Southbury Road Leisure Centre.

Starting at 9.45 with registration and tea or coffee, the day will be opened by the Mayor, Councillor Ann-Marie Pearce followed by hints on how to get fit and what to eat to help secure what we all are all looking for - a longer life.

There'll be plenty to talk about and plenty to see and do from swimming to yoga and from table tennis to badminton, short mat bowls and aqua-aerobics etc.

Lunchtime refreshments will be provided, so all you need to do is come yourself, bring your swim gear, towel and trainers if you are going to take part in the various activities. So that we can plan for the numbers expected please return the slip on the leaflet or call 020 8379 2460 to book your place.

See: *Hopes for a better deal page 2*

FORUM Events

**at Enfield Civic Centre
Silver Street**

Tuesday 26 August Note 10.00 a.m. Start
**ENFIELD'S HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN
INHERITANCE TAX BRIEFING**

*Tuesday 23 September 10.30 a.m. Start
(note not the last Tuesday)*
QUESTION TIME WITH ENFIELD'S MPs
(Members Only) to be preceded by an extraordinary general meeting to discuss changes to the Forum constitution.

Tuesday 28 October 10.30 a.m. Start
CANCER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN
Breast and Prostate Cancer specialists, Mr Guy Webster and Bernadette Phelan.

Tuesday 25 November 10.30 a.m. Start
WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS
with elected Champions of Older People from the Council, Primary Care Trust, NHS Trust etc.

Hopes for a better deal for swimmers

We very much hope the board of Enfield Leisure Centres Trust (ELCT) will announce a better deal for older swimmers at the Fun and Fitness Day being organised by the Forum and the Trust at Southbury Leisure Centre on Tuesday 2nd September 10 am - 4pm.

While our fire has been directed at ELCT because they are the people who manage the leisure centres, we have always acknowledged that the primary cause of the end of free swimming for pensioners was the cut in the Council's grant to ELCT.

So irrespective of the new deal that we hope will be announced on 2nd September, we are giving notice that we want the Council to restore the grant to ELCT so that the charges levied on Enfield's older swimmers are no more onerous than those of other London Boroughs.

Quite frankly, we have been appalled to find that councillors took the grant-cutting decision without considering fully or realising the implications or consequences of their decision. This has only recently become apparent from our lobbying of councillors with responsibilities for monitoring the performance of health organisations in the Borough.

We also have evidence that the decision to end the free swim sessions in Enfield was taken on the basis of erroneous information given to ELCT of the situation in other Boroughs.

Unfortunately, there is no facility to reconsider the Council's 2003 budget but we are giving notice that older people in the Borough are not prepared to be ignored or victimised as we have been following the Council's decision to cut the ELCT grant by £90,000 in a full year and to withdraw the facility for people to pay their council tax at leisure centres, costing ELCT a further £40,000.

We await the ELCT proposals on 2nd September and we await the response of councillors to our protest. The Forum committee will then consult with swimmers who have approached us for help as to the next steps we should take to ensure that the Council lives up to its promise to be: "first for value for money, efficiency and listening to its customers".

Home Art Show at Ordnance Road Library

An exhibition of art and craftwork by people using the Council's home library service will open on Wednesday 17 September at 11 am. The event will include a talk on older people and art and there will be a demonstration of self-help reading groups for older people.

Lunch will be provided and the exhibition continues at the library until 8 October. Free tickets for the opening are available at the library or call 020 8379 1725.

Fair's Fair For Homecare Services or Is It?

We have highlighted in previous Newsletters the concerns of many older people with the proposed changes in home care and other non-residential social care charges and, in particular, the extra burden that will be placed on those with modest private pensions and/or savings of more than £19,500.

Despite repeated requests, we have been unable to obtain a clear guide on the charges that will be imposed on the grounds that there is no guide and that current users of the services will need to be assessed on their ability to pay by the Council before a revised rate is set.

Why is it that when we make a call to Hammersmith and Fulham Council we can get a leaflet setting out clearly the charges they will set - a leaflet incidentally produced in consultation with their local Better Government for Older People organisation.

However, a draft consultation document sent out by Enfield Council included four examples of what the charges might be. The revised charges below are for individuals receiving 21 hours of home care a week and will apply in Enfield from January 2004 and we set them against the charges currently applying in Hammersmith.

Weekly Charges

	<i>Enfield</i>	<i>Hammersmith</i>
Single pensioner on income support	£6.24	£0.00
Single pensioner on income support with £15000 savings	£21.14	£0.00
Married Pensioner on High Income No savings	£81.33	£30.00
Pensioner on Very High Income	£261.39	£150.00

We think Enfield Social Services should come clean and publish their list of charges for home care services so that people can judge whether they are getting best value for their money. Ability to pay those charges is a separate issue and we cannot see why the Council is linking the two - unless, of course, it has something to hide.

We also 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?

THANKS 1

This Newsletter has been generously funded by the Scarman Trust Enfield Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chest to whom we express our grateful thanks.

PCT Launches First Home Safety Audit

Enfield Primary Care Trust is donating Marks and Spencer vouchers worth £145 for the lucky winners of a free prize draw for entrants who complete the first home safety audit written by Forum Committee member Derek Friggens to help prevent falls and accidents in the home. The home safety audit designed and just published by the PCT, is available to all Forum members and affiliated clubs. Thanks to Derek, our Forum is probably the first in the country to compile a "50 questions for the over 50s checklist" and to have it published by the PCT - a great example of the kind of cooperation we would like to see established with other organisations in the Borough. The checklist can be used by members, friends, neighbours, people visiting elderly relatives and all who care for older people.

Despite all the warning publicity there is little sign of a cut in the number of falls and accidents in the home. Each year it is now estimated that 4,700 people aged 65+ die as a result of falls; 340,000 people suffer serious injuries and 460,000 from minor injuries. Forms for the free prize draw must be completed by 1st December 2003 with answers to five simple questions on the safety audit including whether you are now undertaking more physical activity and carrying out regular home safety checks.

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. Falls destroy a person's confidence, increase their isolation and reduce their independence. An estimated 1000 older people die each year as a result of a fall on the stairs in their own home - 75% of fall-related deaths occur in the home.

A study by Research into Ageing shows that women who perform a tailored exercise programme reduced falls by 60% whereas the number of falls sustained by those in the non-exercise group increased by 45%. Research into Ageing has produced an Active for Life falls prevention programme for older people which includes a home hazard reduction booklet, an exercise video and a CDrom. Telephone 01179 406 409 for details.

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 between 9am - 5pm Monday to Friday.

Good News on Health

A big expansion of primary care health services in Enfield is underway. A health centre with 15 GPs at Forest Road, N9, is planned at a cost of £6.8 million, Another at Moorfield Road, EN3, with 10 doctors will cost £5.1 million and a third is planned for Edmonton Green - and all should be completed by early 2005.

Each centre will have bigger and better buildings to provide a wider range of health and social care facilities which may range from minor surgery, diagnostic testing and dermatology services to advice on benefits. These primary care centres will also be training doctors and by treating people locally they will help to relieve the pressure on local hospitals by reducing the duplication of services.

At the same time big changes are envisaged for Chase Farm and Barnet hospitals. Both will continue to have emergency access, operating theatres and intensive care wards, in-patient and out-patient services. But 80% of Chase Farm is so run-down and dilapidated it will have to be rebuilt, just as Barnet has already been rebuilt at a cost of £100 million - and now providing a first-rate service. Discussions are now taking place on whether, for example, women's and children's services should be centred on one site.

Forum member, Jean Calvert, attended an important workshop discussing the future of Barnet and Chase Farm hospitals and forcefully pointed out that any such changes required a massive improvement in transport facilities, particularly in linking the hospitals to people living in eastern Enfield.

It is now apparent that all the changes taking place in the Borough's health facilities cannot be discussed at the monthly Forum meeting. We are in the process of setting up a Health monitoring group which will discuss the proposed changes and put the Forum's point of view.

If you would like to join this group please notify the secretary or chairman as soon as possible.

And toenails too!

The Commission on Health Improvement has praised Enfield PCT for the progress made in chiropody services and particularly the cut in waiting times for treatment. That's good news, but we are obviously still interested in the 2000 people who were taken off the chiropody treatment panel three years ago and left to fend for themselves - a decision which has caused much hardship..

Pinky Millward, the head of chiropody, knows of our concerns and has agreed to meet us again on Friday 12 September. Meanwhile, if you need help with toenail cutting or hard skin, an 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 and ask for Chris Fagan.

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



Our Forum is on the Web

Thanks to Forum Secretary Tony Watts, our Forum now has its own website. Anyone with a computer can access us on www.enfieldover50sforum.org.uk - where you will find a mine of information. This includes: the archive of newsletters, minutes of meetings, annual report, our constitution and development plan, future events, members names and affiliated clubs.

This facility will be a big help in establishing the credentials of the Forum with outside organisations who may be considering helping us or working with us.

So if you are not listed as a member and want an application form to join the Forum, you can just print it off the computer. Most importantly, Tony has listed links with other organisations of older people to help you access key information they have produced.

Having the website means we can share our experiences with other Forums, so strengthening our links as a voice in the community. We appreciate that at the moment less than 20% of older people are said to have access to the internet at home - but this will increase. And meanwhile, you can go to the local library and book up to two hours computer time. The first hour is free and then it costs £1 for each half hour.

The library and Age Concern Enfield may be able to help you become a computer user.

Mass Lobby of Parliament

The National Pensioners Convention, to which the Forum is affiliated, has called a mass lobby of Parliament on Wednesday 10 September at 1pm. It says that this year the increase in the basic state pension was less than £2 a week and for many older women it was even less.

"Yet council tax, utility bills and the cost of living continue to rise - leaving millions of pensioners struggling below the official poverty line".

The NPC invites us to join the lobby and tell our MPs: "Dignity and security in retirement for both today's and tomorrow's pensioners requires a decent state pension, free from means-testing and linked to earnings".

Join the Forum Now - Contact the Secretary on 020 8886 9125 or get a form from the web site - www.enfieldover50sforum.org.uk

Council urged to become an Age Positive Champion

We are now awaiting the Enfield Council Cabinet's decision on the detailed plan submitted to it by the special projects scrutiny panel to help prepare local employers for the planned ending of age discrimination in employment by 2006.

The plan includes a proposal that Enfield Council should become an Age Positive Champion and it should consult with the wider business community on ways of breaking down the age barriers to older people continuing to work full or part-time if they wish to do so.

The Council is also being urged to make sure that their sub-contractors take account of the need to have an aged balanced workforce - all measures that will help to generate more money into the local and national economy which will be good for everyone.

The Council is currently reviewing its recruitment policies and a report is expected to go to Cabinet by the end of the year on the age profile of council employees and job applicants.

We have asked the Council to look at its job advertisements in comparison with those of Barnet Council which are much more age positive and have a much firmer commitment to equal opportunities.

We asked the Council to look at the employment opportunities for older people because final salary occupational pension schemes are declining, private pension schemes are yielding disappointing results and the state retirement pension is currently too low to live on. 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.

A fairer deal for older workers will be 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.

THANKS 2

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.

And we thank Age Concern Enfield for a donation of £145 from its small clubs grant scheme which we greatly appreciate.

An important date for your over 50s diary

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

The new Pension Credit Explained

The Government estimates that more than half of Enfield's 50,000 retired pensioners will be entitled to extra money which could be coming their way.

If you haven't heard about the new Pension Credit starting on 6 October- you should certainly be at the above meeting. Confidential one-to-one advice sessions and refreshments will be available.