

Hearing aids: NHS or private?

You've seen the expensive press advertising campaign always directed at older people. Such as: two digital hearing aids for the price of one - and now a free pair of glasses too! Or there's the offer of a 32-page consumers guide telling you everything you need to know about hearing aids. There's the advert for the "special pensioners' hearing aid said to be **"low cost, simple to operate and brings IMPROVED hearing to thousands!"**

And to grab your attention, the advertisement offers free - 10,000 TV amplifiers to give away just by returning the slip below - and there's no stamp required either. This company says that "many people need some advice with their hearing but one in four do not know where to go". No helpful advice, however, about seeing your GP or the NHS.

You can add to the list of hearing aid dealers this advertisement: Hearing Aids - Your Rights Explained, which is also cleverly targeted at older people as it claims to answer your questions such as **"What financial grants and benefits are available?"**, **"Do I need to pay for an aid at all?"**, **"Where do I go for free advice?"**.

We didn't find the answers to these questions, but we did see some rather misleading information about NHS hearing aids. Take for example this statement: **"To obtain an NHS hearing aid you must first visit your doctor. If hearing loss is confirmed, and if a hearing aid is recommended, an NHS hearing aid will be provided for you on a free loan."**

It reads as though the GP can do the hearing loss test and then just look in his drawer for a hearing aid which they give out **"on loan"**. No mention here that your GP will refer you to an NHS audiology unit, staffed by highly trained and experienced audiologists. Or that they will test you using the most sophisticated equipment to determine the level of your hearing loss and are therefore able to provide you with the most modern made-to-measure digital hearing aids.

Although some private hearing aid dispensers were trained via the NHS system, most did not. NHS audiologists have to undergo a four-year BSc degree course, or a two-year MSc course, both involving a one year practical placement at an accredited centre such as the audiology unit at Chase Farm.

Listed under the **"benefits of private hearing aids"** we found the claim that the **"instrument will be made to your exact prescription to compensate your own hearing loss as closely as possible"**. The clear implication is that the NHS audiologists do not provide hearing aids according to an individual's particular need, but just dish them out wily-nily as though they were dispensing sweets from a jar.

Another so-called benefit of private hearing aids is that you will have a choice of instruments and a choice of manufacturers. At Chase Farm, Siemens, one of the leading companies in the digital aid field, are used a lot and the NHS has contracts with all the major manufacturers including Oticon, Phonak and Danalogic.

Now the only prices for hearing aids we've seen advertised is the two for the price of one starting from £495 and that was for an offer ending on 27 February 2010. Other companies conveniently say that price depends on the extent of hearing loss and the sophistication of the instrument you will need.

And because an aid is digital it doesn't mean it is sophisticated. A digital aid for £495 is going to be very basic in the way it processes sound. The commercial price of NHS fitted aids are estimated to cost about £1500. So that's another good reason to use the NHS - after all, this is one of the reasons you've paid national insurance contributions for many years.

We've had personal experience of one lady who paid over £4,000 for hearing aids which she found unsuitable and after some hassle managed to return them and get her money back minus 12.5% - a loss of £500. So we'd be interested to know about the experience of Forum members using NHS or private hearing aids.

We think this is an important area since it is said that nearly one in seven people need help with hearing and this

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Future FORUM Events

Skidders Court (1 Pellipar Close, Fox Lane)
Tuesday 16 March 10.15am for 10.30am start
Andrea Barrett, Regional Officer of the Parkinson's Disease Society talks about the work of the Society.

FORUM MEETING at the **Civic Centre, Silver Street**
Tuesday 30 March 2010 10.15am for 10.30am start
Dot Gibson, General Secretary of the National Pensioners' Convention speaks about campaigning for a better deal for pensioners.

Visit to the new John Jackson (Bush Hill) Library
Tuesday 13 April 2010 10.15am for 10.30am start
Julie Gibson and Madeline Barratt talk about the development and plans for Enfield's Library Service. The Library is in Agricola Place (EN1 1DW) facing St Marks Anglican Church in Main Avenue. 192 Bus goes to Main Avenue. Bush Hill Pk Station is a 5 min walk away.
Call Polly on 020 8807 2076 to book a place.

Skidders Court (1 Pellipar Close, Fox Lane)
Tuesday 20 April 10.15am for 10.30am start
We will be showing the Age UK 'Digging For (G)old DVD' as part of the Healthy Ageing Campaign. There will also be a speaker from Age UK London.

FORUM MEETING at the **Civic Centre, Silver Street**
Tuesday 29 April 2010 10.15am for 10.30am start
Forum AGM. This will be followed by Borough Police Commander, David Tucker, talking about policing in Enfield.

Forest Road Health Centre (308a Hertford Rd, N9 7HD)
Thursday 6 May 2010 10.15am for 10.30am start
"Almost an Oscar, 1930s to 1950s Cinema"
Forum member, Norman Last will give an entertaining talk about the movies, its stars and associated memorabilia.

Polly's Patter

Last year was a time of transition and challenges for the Forum – it employed new staff, acquired its first office open to the public, elected a new Chair, and embarked on new activities and work. The participation from members living in the East of the borough is increasing and becoming vibrant: more and more people living in N9, N18, EN3 are taking part in the Forum's activities and events organised by the social sub-committee.

I am dedicated to diversity, equality of access and will be continuing my work to enable and improve participation from black and minority ethnic communities not only in the east of the borough but throughout. The meetings at Forest Road in Edmonton are well attended and new members are coming forward to participate and volunteer.

We broke new ground and put down the infrastructure for networking and improved communication with the Forum's affiliated groups: following the success of the first affiliated groups' meeting we agreed to meet twice a year and the next meeting is due in May 2010. Our affiliated groups have identified networking, information sharing and fundraising as vital. One of the delegates said **"I found the meeting very useful - knowing that other groups face similar problems, airing my views and getting new ideas has given me the impetus to continue."**

My aim for 2010 is to continue supporting our affiliated groups and approach new groups that we have identified as potential affiliates. We now have a comprehensive list of volunteers with over 230 members offering to help out. In order to utilise your skills and time that you have so kindly offered we have developed a volunteer training and support programme and I'll be contacting you in the next few weeks with more details. We'll also be convening meetings for the fundraising, IT and campaigning groups already identified.

The social sub-committee has been very active and is increasing the Freedom Pass outings this year – fun, enjoyable days out with a convivial atmosphere at the least cost. The events we offer continue to be popular; for example, the computer course was full in two weeks (50 participants) and there are 25 names on the reserve list. Not to disappoint you, we'll be repeating the course giving everyone the opportunity to attend.

There is a Freedom pass day to the Women's Library for a guided tour, a visit to the exhibition on the history of the suffragette movement and then on to Spitalfields market for lunch and shopping. Also with trips abroad, for example, to Germany for a walking holiday, to Istanbul for sampling of eastern charms, the Forum makes every effort to provide a gamut of activities that all its members can join and enjoy.

More and more people are in contact with the Forum's office and the range of services we offer has widened: from referring people to Age Concern and other organisations to signposting them to the appropriate service provider, for example, within the Council, to acting as an information and referral service. Jane and I are always pleased to meet you when you pop into the office either to renew your membership or with enquiries.

Finally, we have a lot of exciting and new initiatives for 2010; from hoping to organise a Forum choir, to learning opportunities, to a Healthy Lifestyles Day on 22 March at Edmonton Leisure Centre and much more. If you would like to suggest an outing, or have ideas about the work of the Forum we'll be delighted to hear from you.

Polly Lawman, development officer

Notices

Women's Health Day, Wednesday 24 March 2010, 9.30 – 2.00 pm

Trinity at Bowes Methodist Church
Palmerston Road, Palmers Green, London N22 8RA

A fun and informative day Interactive with talks on: **mental health, healthy eating, breast, cervical & bowel screening. You can feel free to ask us anything in this all - female environment.**

Free: lunch, refreshments. Demand is expected to be high so register now by calling Harsha Shah, Telephone: 020 8370 8194

Southgate Symphony Orchestra Spring Concert

Saturday 17 April @ 7.30pm

Bourne Methodist Church, Southgate, N14 6RS

Programme:

Overture: 'Der Freischutz'.....Weber
Violin Concerto in D major.....Tchaikovsky
(with local virtuoso Southgate violinist Gavin Davies)
Symphony No 4 in D major.....Schumann

Box Office ticket prices are £10 (concessions) £8 (over60s & children). Forum members £7 if purchased before the concert.

Please call the Forum office 020 8807 2076

These boots are made for walking!

So come on our Walking holiday in the Ahr Valley in Germany this summer August 23rd-27th

Following the success of the Walking and cycling trip to Holland last year, Olivia has arranged a walking trip to Germany in the beautiful Eifel Hills. The trip costs £275.00 for five days and includes travel by coach and ferry or Eurotunnel, half board accommodation and guided walks and wine tastings. This is an easy walking holiday and should be suitable for anyone who has no serious health or mobility restrictions. **More details from Olivia on 0208 4478841 or email Olivia.g@virgin.net.**

Older Peoples' Twinning EU Project

The Forum will be putting together a steering committee of older people to be involved in delivering the outcomes set down in the EU Twinning project plan. The qualities we are looking for are a good understanding of older peoples issues, able to research and lead discussions, good communication skills and able to work as part of a small team. Fluency in German, French or Greek would be a real advantage. Any members interested in serving on the steering committee should email the secretary (tony_watts@blueyonder.co.uk).

Tony Watts, Secretary

Museum in Docklands trip Tuesday February 9th

40 Forum members enjoyed a day trip to the Museum in Docklands, braving the chilly winter sunshine.

After enjoying homemade cakes, tea and coffee on arrival, we went to the lecture theatre for a talk by the curator. The slide show and talk was one hour long and was packed full of interesting information about the history of the Isle of Dogs and the development of London as the busiest docks in the world for centuries. We heard how the docks came to be in medieval times because of the geography around the river Thames. The life and time of Dockers and their families was explained, along with the formation of unions and ultimately the TGWU. He talked about the impact of the war on the docklands, the development of container shipping and the subsequent lack of need for warehouses, leaving large areas of derelict land. He finished with the resistance of locals to the "Big money is moving in" poster campaign but on a positive note, 120,000 new jobs were created in the new developments.

We then headed back to the restaurant for a lovely lunch and then two hours viewing all the galleries and wonderful displays. Everyone said what a lovely day they'd had.

Olivia Goodfellow

The Chair's chair Forum heads for Europe



From Grunt to Chip

At our last Forum meeting, Tom Wright, CEO of Age UK, said that communication is of great importance in ensuring that, as older people, we can maximise the various benefits available to us. This statement made me begin to think about what we mean by "communication"?

In its most simple form it is transmitting information from one person to another: hence the "grunt" in my title. We can't imagine how Adam and Eve "talked" to each other but it is reasonable to assume that once mankind discovered it could make noises with its mouth some form of language would begin to emerge. Similarly scratching an image on clay with a stick could communicate important facts such as where to find animals for food, shelter, etc. Communication is a means to survival: take as an example a baby's cry of hunger. These are the basics.

Throughout world history different peoples developed their own languages – the Tower of Babel – and, in a curious way, instead of bringing peoples together the very differences have driven us apart. Written language began to develop around 3000BC in Mesopotamia to record such things as the harvest i.e. to build up a body of knowledge for future reference. It developed and changed from Egyptian hieroglyphs and the Greek and Roman alphabets to, in our Western World, the alphabet of 26 letters. It is interesting to note that the Chinese require 50,000 "logograms" to write an equal number of words.

But our world is light years away from the Mesopotamians in our ability to communicate. It would seem to be magic to them that, as I am writing this on my laptop computer, I can instantaneously send this script thousands of miles away – or even to the next village. For me, as well, this fact is astounding. How many of us as children had a telephone in our house and yet how many now say they cannot survive without their mobiles!

Those of you who use emails know their value in keeping in touch with family and friends across the world. But, for some, new technology seems to be retrograde – "I can't see why I should bother." I refer you to the start of my column – unless we embrace the "computer chip" we will find ourselves in a state of illiteracy unable to access the information we need to participate fully in the modern world. So, take every opportunity the Forum offers to become acquainted with computers.

We are incredibly lucky in this country as our access to the Internet is not mediated - it uses the almost universal language of (American) English which seems to have torn down the Tower of Babel and has become a unifying force allowing us to speak to the Global Village.

Irene Richards

Following the initiative of our secretary, Tony Watts, the Forum will soon be breaking new ground by representing the borough at top level European meetings to exchange ideas with older people in Enfield's twinned towns – Courbevoire (Paris), Gladbeck (Germany), and Halandri (Athens).

Working with the Over 50s Forum, Enfield Council has secured €47,172.40 – just over £42,000 from the highly competitive EU fund - Europe for Citizens programme. The project will bring together older people from France, Germany, Greece, and Enfield to discuss their experiences and knowledge of living, studying, working, and growing older in their respective towns across Europe.

"We are delighted to have initiated this project since there are no national boundaries to longer life expectancy and we need to see what lessons we can learn about how other countries are tackling this new phenomenon", says Tony Watts.

"We will be holding international meetings in Paris and at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, and will host our international partners who will visit us in Enfield as the project -which starts in April 2010 and runs to March 2012 - moves along.

"We aim to expand our knowledge, learn from our twinned partners and see what we can offer to them. This is exciting and gives older people the chance to have some influence over their lives across Europe. The council has helped us develop a unique partnership with three European towns and we will relish this opportunity," he added.

Congratulating the Forum for **"working so hard in getting this off the ground with the council,"** Neil Rousell, co-director, education, children's services and leisure, said: **"Education and learning never ends and we recognise that we have a duty to develop learning opportunities for all ages. This project brings people together to discover new ideas and to share them. It is about 'active citizenship' and will be most enlightening to see what it recommends".**

The EU funds stipulate that citizens should learn from each other and build strong networks in hands across Europe. The project aims to bring about positive and lasting outcomes for older people in the three twinned towns and Enfield. Among the topics to be covered will be networking and creating partnerships; sharing best practice; and identifying multinational solutions among different cultures and societies across Europe.

See the facing page for your opportunity to get involved with this EU Project.

Enfield Croquet Club
Free croquet coaching course starting April 17th
 Details from Brian Dawes 8366 6005 or see
www.enfieldcroquet.org

Older People's Partnership Board's Engagement Conference

Friday 16th April 2010, 10am - 4pm, Enfield County Upper School, Holly Walk, EN2 6QG

"Having your say on the Future for Older People in Enfield"

The Older People's Partnership Board wishes to invite you to the Older People's Engagement Conference to discuss the key priority issues and needs of older people in Enfield, to help plan for now and into the future.

I would like to register for the Older People's Engagement Conference, 16th April 2010

Name:

Address:

Telephone Number:

Email:

Please return to Felicity Cox, Partnership Manager, Health and Well-being, London Borough of Enfield, Civic Centre, Silver Street, Enfield, EN1 3XY

Calling police made easier

We've all grown up with 999 drilled into us as the emergency number to call for police, fire and ambulance services. And we've also heard of the not-so-funny stories of people abusing the service. Like the man who called 999 to ask the police what time his local supermarket opened.

Here in Enfield, police regularly receive misrouted 999 calls – examples of this include children playing with telephones, 'unlocked' mobile phones calling from people's pockets and even 999 called in error when people have been cleaning their phones.

But there's also examples of people abusing the 999 system such as the police officer called to a neighbour's dispute. On arrival all appeared quiet, but the caller wanted to complain that her neighbour's apples were falling into her garden.

Another officer reported that a 999 call was made to police about squirrels fighting in a park. Or there was the time when someone was watching an animal rescue programme and called via 999 as they had missed the telephone number on the screen that was given if viewers were interested in adopting the dog that had been featured.

The Metropolitan Police Service now has a new telephone number for use in all non-emergency situations. The number 0300 123 1212

- should be used when people in London need to contact the MPS and it is not an emergency.

The MPS has introduced this number to make it easier for people to contact them which will give greater access to their services. By providing people with one memorable number it is expected that the amount of inappropriate 999 calls to the MPS will reduce. This will further enable them to respond quickly and safely to emergency calls and best identify how to respond to other calls.

In an emergency people should always dial 999. An emergency is when a crime is happening, someone suspected of a crime is known to be nearby, or someone is injured, being threatened or in danger.

For all other calls to the MPS, people should dial 0300 123 1212, such as when reporting a crime or an incident that does not meet the above criteria, to speak to local police or when seeking advice on police matters. It is still possible to contact local police stations with pre-existing numbers and, in particular, Safer Neighbourhood Teams should still be contacted using their direct telephone numbers.

The MPS is using a 0300 number in accordance with Ofcom's recommendation for public sector bodies. When calling 0300 123 1212 local rates apply from BT landlines. Other networks and calls from mobiles may vary.

Are you paying a price for loyalty?

When your house insurance comes up for renewal, do you get another quote or just stay loyal to the same company? The question is justified after reading of a policyholder - 58 years with the same company - who was quoted £648 for a year's renewal cover that he could get for £162 if he was a new customer.

The press has been full of cases giving similar examples of people being asked £854 for home insurance and finding the same deal for £200 with another company. Or there was the case of the accountant quoted £551 for home insurance renewal by a company with whom he had been a customer for 10 years, and when he went on to their website as a new customer he was quoted £173.

There is strong evidence that all insurance companies take particular advantage of older people. They think we don't shop around and compare prices and charges; not enough of us use the internet. Insurers think they can get away with pushing up prices year after year - and they do.

We think it is time the Financial Services Authority implemented its own "treating customers fairly" rules and tackled the insurance industry which uses any excuse to push up premiums - and they get away with it because of our reluctance to switch.

The Sunday Times (24/1/10) quoted the case of a man who had been with the same insurer since the 1950s being charged **£1,690** for buildings and contents insurance and after a simple search, found the same cover for **£200**. Another man with the same insurer for 47 years was being overcharged by **£800** a year.

Forced by rising premiums, it is little wonder that many older people on low and fixed incomes are no longer getting home insurance, though this is a big risk. **"It is not only insurers that punish loyalty"**, says the Sunday Times. **"Energy, savings, mortgage and telecom customers can also be stung if they regularly do not reassess their deals."**

Poetry Group meetings

Our next meeting is from 10.30am to 12 noon on Thursday, 18th March, the theme being London. Myra Schneider, a well-known poet who lives locally, hopes to visit us at the Oakwood Library on that day.

Further meetings have been arranged at the same times at the Oakwood Library on 15th April, 20th May and 17th June.

Handy service receives cash boost

Due to an increase in funding, the Supporting Independent Lifestyles (**SILs**) charity has been able to expand its handyperson service for Enfield residents which will now be available five days a week. In addition, electrical and plumbing services provided by the scheme will increase from two to three days a week.

Extra Government funding of £185,000 has come from the Department for Communities and Local Government. which will secure the service until April 2011.

The handyperson service helps to ensure that older people are able to remain safe and independent at home for as long as possible, helping to reduce hospital admission or pre-admission, as well as improving home security.

Supporting Independent Lifestyles was set up two years ago in conjunction with Age Concern Enfield to deliver handyperson services including odd jobs such as grass cutting, fitting security chains, moving furniture, decorating and minor home improvements. All front line staff carry badges and are CRB checked and the charge for work carried out is competitive. **Prices start from £15 per hour plus the cost of materials. Plumbing and electrical works cost £25 an hour.**

Servicing boilers will cost £60 and gas fires £40. The range of jobs undertaken includes installing shower units, changing taps, radiators and fuses, replacing light fittings, installing intercom systems and much more.

For the last two years the service has only been open Monday to Wednesday. With the much welcomed increase in funding, **SILs** can expand both its non-specialist and specialist areas to offer vulnerable residents in the borough a more responsive and flexible approach.

If you would like to find out more about the service and charges, please contact the SILs office on 020 8375 4115 Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm. Leave a message on the voicemail if you call out of hours.

Published by Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum.

Contact: The Secretary, Millfield House, Silver Street, Edmonton, N18 1PJ. **Tel:** 020 8807 2076

Still 2million OAPs in poverty

Daily Mirror report 28 January 2010

"The number of pensioners living in poverty has fallen by almost a third in 10 years - but at least two million remain below the breadline. There were 2.9 million poor pensioners in 1998, according to the Office for National Statistics.

That had fallen to two million by 2008 figures showed yesterday, but experts fear the number has risen since as a result of the recession and last year's harsh winter. The number of companies cutting pension benefits is likely to drive the number higher in future.

In 1977, the state pension provided 53% of the average pensioner's income but after the Conservatives cut the link with earnings in 1980 its relative value fell. By 2007 it made up just 37% of their income.

Pensioners are officially in poverty if they are forced to survive on less than 60% of average wages, after housing costs.

Andrew Harrop of Age Concern & Help the Aged, said **"progress had come to a standstill"** at best in the last three years, he explained: **"Many pensioners on a low income will be struggling to make ends meet as their bills soar after the recent freeze."**

The above report from the Daily Mirror is reason enough to support the April 10 national march and rally called by the National Pensioners Convention and significantly supported for the first time by the British Medical Association and RADAR, the disability network - as well as the TUC.

The National Pensioners' Convention March and Rally takes place on Saturday 10 April 2010. We will be joining Forums and pensioner groups from around the country. Assembling 12 noon Temple Place, Embankment. March to Trafalgar Square for speeches, music, entertainment.

The Forum will be there with our own newly produced banner and we are making arrangements to go in groups. You can either go and return by coach from the Civic Centre, cost £5 (leaving at 10.30 am - book before 15 March 020 8807 2076) or use your Freedom Pass and meet Demetri St Andrew at Southgate tube station at 11am or Irene Richards no later than 10.40 am at Enfield Town station.

To book your coach seat you must phone the office 8 807 2076 and it would be most helpful if you also let us know if you intend meeting up with Demetri or Irene. Which ever way you travel look out for the Forum's new banner!

The march and rally is likely to take place less than a month before the General Election when some 70% of pensioners are expected to vote - the highest section of the community to do so. That's why it is important that our voice be heard loud and clear.

The six major policy areas the NPC want the parties to address include:

- * **Raising** the basic state retirement pension above the official poverty level (now calculated to be £165 per week) and linking increases now to earnings or prices, whichever is highest.
- * **Introducing** free long-term and social care funded by general taxation without means-testing, rationing or being dependent on a postcode lottery to get help.
- * **Council** services to be funded through national income tax rather than council tax.
- * **Free** UK-wide travel to be extended to all forms of public transport which would encourage independent living, greater mobility leading to reduced demand on health and care services.
- * **Ending** all forms of age discrimination affecting older people in the health service or in buying goods and services such as travel insurance.
- * **Raising** the winter fuel allowance to £500 per household to cut winter deaths and fuel poverty.

Dot Gibson, the new NPC general secretary said: **"All the political parties need to realise that if they want our votes, they must start addressing our concerns. Whilst it's true that pensioners don't vote en bloc, they are more likely than any section in the community to turn out to the polling booth."**

Could this apply to you?

An estimated £3 billion is languishing in forgotten pensions paid for by millions of people while they were at work. Some of it could be yours. It may seem strange to forget a pension. However, many people work for a company which enrolls them in the scheme automatically - or they tick a box to join - and then leave after a few years and forget all about it.

Last year the Government's Pensions Tracing Service reunited more than 64,000 people with lost or forgotten pensions. It records more than 200,000 company and personal pension schemes. To find a lost pension, the service needs to know where you worked and when. Not only work pensions are forgotten. Millions of people take out a personal pension and then stop paying in.

You need to write down what you can remember with any records or details you may have kept and call 0945 6002 537. Remember, if you don't claim it somebody else will keep it.

or this?

Men aged 65 or more with a dependent wife under 60 have less than one month to claim an extra £57.05 a week. This Adult Dependency Increase (ADI) is paid with the state retirement pension, but it cannot be claimed after 5 April 2010. Alternatively, it can also be paid for a dependent adult who looks after the children of the person getting the pension.

If you claim an ADI before the final date it can be backdated by up to three months. So you could get up to £700 and the money is taxable. The increase for the wife normally ends when she reaches 60. At that time she can claim her own state pension or a category B pension based on her husband's national insurance contributions.

ADI's are paid for an adult dependent on a pensioner. So it is not paid to someone who has an income of their own above certain limits. It will not be paid to someone who works and earns more than £54.30 a week. And it is not normally paid to a female pensioner with a dependent husband - or to civil partners. For further information call 0800 678 1132 and ask for form BF225 or the form can be downloaded by going to www.direct.gov.uk and put BF225 in the search box.

Forum Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 27 April @ 10.30am, Civic Centre.

The agenda for the AGM and nomination papers for the committee will be available on the Forum's website, at the March Forum meeting or from the office - 020 8807 2076.

NHS plans to deliver more joined-up services closer to home

A year ago, in April 2009 to be precise, NHS Enfield was running a budget deficit of £28million and they are now forecasting a loss of £10.4 million by the end of March 2010 - a reduction of some £17 million which still leaves a big financial gap to be filled.

"It is important to note that the savings we have made have not had a detrimental impact on services. All savings have been made by ensuring that we secured value for money from existing contracts with service providers", says the local NHS.

With a general election forecast in May, it is difficult to assess the health policies of a new government and what impact they will have on existing local plans now going ahead for the three boroughs, Barnet, Enfield and Haringey and due to be completed by 2013. Meanwhile, NHS Enfield plans to establish four local commissioning groups from April 2010, each led by a Clinical Director. They will be based in:

* **North East Enfield** – the Enfield College site on Hertford Road will have a new polyclinic

* **Edmonton** – Evergreen and Forest Road will operate as a joint polyclinic. Between them these two centres already provide fit-for-purpose facilities for 37,000 registered patients served by 11 GP practices, 24 community and consultant led clinics.

They will have a 12h/7 day week GP walk-in service, diagnostic services such as breast and bowel cancer screening, blood test facilities, ultrasound and ECG services, all co-located with health promotion support services such as quit smoking and pregnancy crisis support.

* **Enfield North** – Polysystem hub at Chase Farm hospital which will include an Urgent Care Centre at the hospital. Current plans are to have a service with diagnostics, a paediatric assessment unit and an elderly assessment unit, all staffed by specialist doctors and nurses. This will be open 12 hours a day to cover the period of maximum demand. In addition there is to be an out-of-hours co-located GP service to provide urgent care services.

It has now been decided that, as well as the 12-hour consultant-led urgent care service, there will be an integrated 24-hour doctor-led primary care service which will deliver overnight urgent care. This will mean there will be open access for registered and unregistered patients through the night on the Chase Farm site.

* **Southgate/Palmers Green** - A new super GP surgery with three integrated GP practices will open at 808 Green Lanes in June 2010.

New Edmonton access centre

The new state of the art Edmonton Access Centre, based in the library in Edmonton Green Shopping Centre, allows residents to access a variety of services in one place. Staff can provide customers with general information on all council services, and can resolve many enquiries straight away.

Residents can also see a benefit assessor to make a claim, or to advise of a change of circumstances, which may affect a benefit entitlement. Visitors can present documents which can be verified, checked and scanned by the team to allow the assessors to complete the customer's claim. The service can also provide customers with general information on benefit claims, and make appointments.

Cllr Henry Pipe said: **"This newly refurbished centre provides a welcoming area for members of the public who have general enquiries about any council service. Trained and professional staff ensure that many of their enquires can be dealt with straight away, and those that cannot are referred to the appropriate service.**

"In addition, the Access Centre also houses the benefits service, so that any resident who wishes to make a new claim, or who needs to amend their claim can come here or telephone to have their issue dealt with." The Centre is open between 8.30am - 5.00pm For an appointment at the Access Centre call 020 8379 4992.

A & E: is there a better way?

We know of the steadfast support there is for traditional A&E departments at local hospitals, but at the same time we are told not only of long waiting times to be seen, but that up to 75% of cases could be seen faster and more efficiently nearer to a patient's home.

That may be true, but people will rightly ask about the 25% of patients who go to an A&E with serious injuries or illnesses and they want to be sure that this facility is still available to them when they need it. On the other hand, NHS Enfield claims that every A&E patient costs at least £55 a visit and many health professionals feel that the money they get from the government could be better spent if visits to A&E departments could be reduced.

What are the local plans for A&E alternatives?

With that in mind Enfield NHS is planning to create an Urgent Care Centre at North Middlesex University Hospital. The centre will provide a service that is led by GPs and specialist nurses. The centre will share reception facilities with the hospital's A&E department and the service will be open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The centre will be able to treat all but the critically ill or severely injured patients, or patients that do not need intensive or specialist care. This includes cuts, broken limbs and scalds. From 1 March North Midd. will provide a single front door for patients using the Walk in Centre and the A&E department services. The changes are the first step on the journey to creating an urgent care centre, co-located with A&E on the site in the autumn.

The Urgent Care Centre will offer patients direct access to expert medical treatment at any time of the day or night. Since it will be linked to the A & E department at the North Midd. any patients arriving at the Urgent Care Centre who require emergency treatment will be able to be transferred immediately. This will ensure that patients are seen more quickly and by an appropriate medical expert. Most minor injuries will be treated at the Urgent Care Centre, while the more seriously injured will be treated within A&E.

To help you choose the right NHS service and get the best treatment we list below the actions you should take:

Choking, chest pain, blacking out, blood loss - straight to A&E or dial 999

Chase Farm Hospital, The Ridgeway, Enfield, EN2 8JL
North Middlesex University Hospital, Sterling Way, N18 1QX

Cuts, strains, itches, sprains - Walk-in Centre, Urgent Care Centre or Minor Injuries Unit

A GP led walk-in service is available from 8am – 8pm 7 days a week, 365 days per year at Evergreen Primary Care Centre, Smythe Close, Edmonton (near ASDA Supermarket).

North Middlesex NHS Walk-in centre, North Middlesex Hospital, Sterling Way, N18 1QX

Vomiting, ear pain, sore belly, back ache - contact your GP surgery
If you have any trouble registering with your local GP, contact NHS Enfield, 020 8370 8100

Diarrhoea, runny nose, painful cough, headache - contact local pharmacies

To find your local pharmacist you can visit www.nhs.uk/service-directories or call NHS Direct

Unwell? Unsure? Confused? Need help? -

Call NHS Direct, 0845 56 57

Hangover, grazed knee, sore throat, cough - self care

A lot of illnesses can be treated in your home by using over-the-counter medicine and getting plenty of rest. Ensure your medicine cabinet is well stocked with:

- * Paracetamol or Aspirin - indigestion remedy
- * Anti-diarrhoeal medicine - plasters
- * Re-hydration mixture - thermometer

So how do we get there?

They say you learn something new every day - and this is certainly true when it comes to public transport to local hospitals. We are now being told that patient access to them is not considered by Transport for London when planning their routes. They take into consideration access to schools, shopping centres and trains for commuters - but not public transport services to hospitals - which with penal car park charges is of growing importance to older people

So Forum committee member **Peter Smith**, who is also on the *Enfield Transport Users Group*, *NHS Enfield Transport Users Group* and is vice-chair of *Enfield NHS LINKs*, has written to our three MPs about the delay in getting the 307 to go into Barnet Hospital and the 318 to be rerouted so that it will go from Winchmore Hill direct to the North Mid.

And the Forum is asking **Nigel Beverley**, the NHS Enfield chief executive, and Enfield council chiefs to intervene and use their influence to improve public transport access to hospitals which was an integral part of the review of health services in the area.

"The government has a grand plan for medical provision which has legislation behind it. Unfortunately it failed to ensure access by public transport was part of it. So we request that questions be asked to the relevant government departments," says Peter.

"TFL have agreed that the 307 from Ponders End to Arkley in Barnet can be re-routed onto the bus stand at Barnet General Hospital, but with their usual bureaucracy say it will take until 2011 or 2012 to alter the bus stand to accommodate the extra bus. To me it should only take one week maximum", he adds.

"The second is to extend the 318 bus that at present comes from Stamford Hill to the North Mid. bus stand; we would like to extend it to Winchmore Hill via Silver Street. Hedge Lane. Firs Lane, Barrowell Green, Green Lanes, on to the bus stand near the junction of Station Road & Fords Road, and in doing so it would pick-up local residents on route.

"This extension would marry up with the 329 and 125, at Winchmore Hill, collecting passengers from Enfield Town, Chase Side and Winchmore Hill, then at Silver Street marry up with the W6, Passengers from Southgate and Palmers Green, the 144 passengers from Wood Green & Upper Edmonton, the bus 34 passengers from New Southgate and Arnos Grove, the 102 passengers from Muswell Hill, and Bounds Green, on to the North Mid. and beyond. We know the route has been trial tested and will work.

"We do not consider what we are requesting is unreasonable or excessive, so would request your support to bring it to a speedy fruition by lobbying the relevant department and organisation on this important matter. The government and the mayor of London talk about green transport - better public transport to local hospitals will make it happen", says Peter Smith.

Health snippets

Mobiles cleared

The Journal of Alzheimer's Disease has reported an American study which claims that talking on a mobile phone could protect against Alzheimer's and even reverse the disease - contrary to fears that mobiles are a health hazard.

TV watchers beware

If you are a couch potato watching TV for four hours a day - or more - then you face an 80% increase in risking a stroke or heart attack. Research carried out in Australia revealed that every hour in a day spent TV watching raised the risk of heart disease by a fifth. This link appeared to hold regardless of other factors such as smoking, unhealthy diet and lack of exercise.

The study, published in the journal of the American Heart Association, analysed the TV viewing of 8,800 adults over seven days and then monitored them for six years. David Dunstan, who led the study said: **"Too much sitting is bad. In addition to doing regular exercise, keep in mind to move more, more often".**

Dementia rises

A new Oxford University study claims there are now an estimated 822,000 dementia sufferers in the UK - 100,000 more than previously thought - and they warn the numbers could reach over a million in the next 15 years. Although there is no known cure the researchers say that looking after the body, avoiding obesity can cut the risk by 20%. The cost of dementia to the economy is an estimated £23 billion a year.

This figure is made up by £9 billion in social care costs, £12 billion in unpaid care and £1.2 billion in health care bills. Each dementia patient costs the economy £27,647 a year, nearly five times as much as a cancer patient and eight times as much as someone suffering from heart disease. Yet for every £1 spent on dementia research, £12 is spent on cancer and £3 on heart disease. The Alzheimer's Research Trust argues that if we spent more on dementia research now it would save crippling multi-billion pound health care bills in the future.

New WEA course

The Thames and its historic river banks

Learn more about the river, which is London's life blood, from our popular tutor, Patricia Melville, who will be leading six two hour sessions on The Thames and its Historic River Banks on Tuesday mornings from 20 April, at Enfield Baptist Church, Cecil Road. The fee: £38.50 and may include a visit.

For more details refer to the Workers' Educational Association website on www.london.wea.org.uk (London Branches), or contact Norma Chapman, 8882 0615, or Shirley Sandford, 8882 0615.

Random round-up

How's this?

Aged 105, Mildred Sulston started learning and playing the guitar at 95 after she broke her shoulder which forced her to stop playing the violin, which she learned as a young woman. Aged 12, she survived a raid by 14 German planes which dropped their bombs near her Chingford home. A widow, she rises at 6.30am and sometimes plays the guitar until she feels tired. **"I couldn't do that in a nursing home",** she says.

Welllderly

That's the new buzzword devised by Equalities Minister Harriet Harman to describe **"well, active, healthy older people"**. However, we have no plans to name ourselves the Enfield Welllderly Forum just in case people think we are in the car repair or shipbuilding business.

Good advice

"We urge people to be on their guard for unexpected letters, e-mails, texts and telephone calls with seemingly tempting offers. We ask you to stop, think and ask yourself; 'What's in it for them?'" - Ron Gainsford, Trading Standards Institute.

Help

If you feel compelled to cut back on basics such as food or heating because of high energy bills, call Age UK's helpline on 0800 009 966 for advice on the extra benefits you may be entitled to claim.

Progress?

A study carried out in Chelmsford by Essex University has claimed that a 10-year-old in 1998 was fitter than 95% of his or her counterpart today

Question: why don't we invest more in preventative medicine and healthier lifestyles rather than talk about expenditure cuts?

Let's get fit for a longer life

If taking up exercise after retirement can prolong your life - even increasing your chances of living until you are 90, according to the Archives of Internal Medicine - why are there still so many people reluctant to start improving their fitness levels?

It is a fair question to pose since the annual health survey for England revealed recently that 94% of men and 96% of women failed to meet the Department of Health's target of taking 30 minutes of moderate exercise five days a week. (Sport England wants people to exercise for 30 minutes a day - but only three times a week)

According to LBE's sports and development team 55% of all adults living in Enfield are not participating regularly in any moderate intensity sport and physical activity, which is above the London average. And the team has set a modest target of increasing participation by only 1% a year.

Levels of non-participation are even higher among some Enfield residents. For example, over three-quarters of all adults with a long-term illness or disability do not participate in any physical activity. Apparently, we still spend most of our time watching TV, glued to the computer screen, eating and reading.

"The secret for older exercise novices is to start within your capabilities, and move boundaries with your fitness level. Be it walking, the gym, Pilates or yoga, you need to push yourself. And find an activity that respects your dicey bits, If your knees are knobly, try swimming instead of walking"; says Saga magazine's Emma Soames.

"At any age, the best exercise is a mixture of disciplines. Cardiovascular combined with flexibility disciplines such as yoga can help prevent falls - possibly the greatest danger to the over 70s. So the overall message is clear: find a few activities to enjoy, and keep active." she adds

The Forum would like to hear of some imaginative plans like those in Birmingham where the city council and the local NHS offered free use of the civic swimming pools, gyms and exercise classes if people attended four times a month. Before the scheme began, just 90 people were using the facilities regularly. Seven months later the numbers had soared to 6,500.

The potential such a scheme offers to making a lasting impact on improving the health and well-being of older people is pretty obvious, and were it to be repeated round the country would, we suspect, make a big dent in NHS spending. So why don't we invest more in preventative medicine and healthier lifestyles rather than talk about expenditure cuts?

Leisure centres changing hands?

We are anxiously waiting to hear the council's plans for the future of our leisure centres which have been in the hands of liquidators for more than three years. The council have told us they are talking with two private companies with a view to a take-over and we are

keen to hear what incentives they will offer to encourage more people to use the fine facilities available at Southbury, Southgate, Edmonton, Arnos and Albany (Hertford Rd.).

We've laid down a marker to the council that we expect the new management - expected to be announced in the Spring with a full take-over in June - to at least maintain, if not improve, the discount scheme exclusively enjoyed by Forum members.

At the last count we had 379 Forum members signed up to the all-inclusive package offered by the leisure centres - swim, gym, sauna, steam, classes (e.g.yoga/Pilates), racket sports, Over 50s days etc) which from April will cost an all-in £32 a month or £320 for a full year - a saving of £70 on the normal annual price. And if that isn't worth your Forum subscription of £6 a year, we don't know what is.

As part of the campaign to improve fitness levels, we have set a target of getting that 379 figure of full Aspire leisure centre members up to 500 and to stimulate interest we are holding a

Healthy Lifestyles Day at Edmonton Leisure Centre on Monday 22 March from 10am - 3pm.

Dr Zafar Iqbal, Tottenham Hotspur's top medical man, will be there to point out that your chances of living longer are better and the risk of getting a chronic illness such as heart or kidney disease, stroke or diabetes, will be less, if you change your lifestyle, exercise regularly and have a healthy diet. And he'll be backed by a team from the Tottenham Hotspur Foundation demonstrating their **HOPE** programme - **Helping Older People Exercise**.

Olivia Goodfellow will be there taking a seated exercise class and pharmacists will be on site doing blood pressure, height, weight and cholesterol checks. You can swim and enjoy all the facilities at the leisure centre - play table tennis, badminton or short mat bowls. And it's all **FREE** including refreshments. So come and meet and make new friends.

The event is sponsored by the Enfield NHS, Enfield Leisure Centres and the Home Support Network.

One phone call to the Over 50s Forum is all you have to make.

Call 020 8807 2076 to register.

Get fit for a longer life

Late news: We've negotiated a special deal for Forum members taking out a £30 monthly or £300 annual direct debit for the all-in savings package outlined above. If you sign up during March there'll be no joining fee, saving an additional £35. Sign up in March for the £300 deal and you'll save even more! You won't pay the £20 April increase bringing the saving to £55, plus there's another £70 saving on the normal annual debit charge - total savings £125. But - and it's a big but - you have to be a Forum member and sign up with the leisure centres before 31 March 2010. So get cracking - it's worth it!

Lighten up!

Manage stress with fun and relaxation.

Switch the stress in your life off, turn the relaxation you can enjoy on. Join us on **May 22nd** at the **Friends Meeting House** in **Winchmore Hill** for a day of fun, relaxation and calm, mixed in with **aromatherapy, chi reflexology, massage and stress busting tips**. This light-hearted day is suitable for all ages and abilities and if you book a place by **April 30th**, you will get an early bird discount as well!

For more information or to book a place, call Olivia on 8447 8841 or 07881832783 or email Olivia.g@virgin.net



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Support for Parkinson's patients

NHS Enfield has agreed to continue the commitment of having a locally-based Parkinson's Disease Nurse Specialist, once the two-year funding for the post provided by the Parkinson's Disease Society comes to an end in December 2010.

Parkinson's Disease is a progressive neurological condition, affecting movement and speech. It occurs when cells are lost from the part of the brain that controls our movement. The average age of onset is 55-65 years old. However, 1:20 people diagnosed are under the age of 40. Approximately 1 in 500 or about 120,000 people in the UK have Parkinson's Disease with some 700 people estimated to suffer from the disease in Enfield.

Forum member David Oliver says: "I would like to see NHS Enfield provide facilities similar to those currently provided at the Edgware Parkinson's Disease Unit. Several members of the Enfield branch of the Parkinson's Disease Society are having to travel to Edgware to obtain the service they require.

What support is available for people with Parkinson's disease in Enfield?

Laura Wilde is the Parkinson's Disease Nurse Specialist working closely with GPs, consultants and other health professionals. Laura aims to provide:

- * Support and advice to patients and carers/relatives.
- * Information and support on diagnosis.
- * Medication management
- * Support with social issues.
- * Advice on benefits
- * Referrals to community therapy teams, such as physiotherapy.
- * Home visits for those who are housebound
- * Telephone support (telephone clinics)
- * Nurse led clinics

Referrals to the service can be made through your GP or other healthcare professionals. At a recent health scrutiny panel meeting it was reported that Laura - (who is doing a wonderful job under the present inadequate situation) - has a caseload of over 100 patients, mainly referrals by GPs.

Talks are taking place with other local services and managers to develop a community based multidisciplinary clinic. The aim is to have one clinic with physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, dieticians and occupational therapists.

However, only 45% of referrals are made by GPs to the PD Nurse Specialist, which begs the question whether all of them are aware of her existence. Laura operates from the Forest Primary Care Centre Monday -Friday 9am -5pm 308a Hertford Road Edmonton, N9 7HD Tel: 0208 344 3140 Ext 3164. Fax: 0208 344 3158

Email: laura.wilde@enfield.nhs.uk Telephone support and advice to discuss diagnosis of PD, for example, or medication, is available Monday 13.30 - 16.00 and Friday 09.30 - 12.30.

You can call Stephanie Jones, the Parkinson's Disease Society's Information and Support Worker for Enfield on 0844 225 3708 who will give advice and practical support to patients and carers.

Forum social calendar

Tue 23 Mar 2010 – visit to De Havilland Aircraft Museum, London Colney, St. Albans, for a guided tour. For further details and bookings please ring **Bill Thear**.

Fri 26 – Mon 29 Mar 2010 – Paris holiday with Crusader a special spring trip to one of the most beautiful capital cities. Cost: £305pp by coach and ferry. For bookings and details please contact **Olivia Goodfellow**.

Mon 12 Apr 2010 – dinner at the 'Taste of Raj', 76 Aldermans Hill, N13 (opposite Broomfield Park). Join us for a veritable feast of the finest Indian cuisine. Cost: £11.50 (excluding drinks.) For further details and booking please contact **Roy Barrows**. Once booked send your cheque* to Roy's address.

Wed 14 Apr 2010 – Two-in-one offer: a trip to the Women's Library, Old Street, E1, and lunch at Spitafields market. Join us for a morning of exploration including an exhibition of the history of women's liberation, a talk, a guided tour and access to the Handling collections. After the visit we'll lunch at Spitafields Market and explore bargains on offer! (Lunch is optional). Cost: £4 plus travel & lunch. Places are limited to 15. For further details and bookings please contact **Polly or Jane**.

Fri 16 Apr 2010 – Trip to the Wallace Collection museum. Put your freedom pass to good use and join us for a guided tour of Marquesses of Hertford and Sir Richard Wallaces' beautiful period home. On display is the finest collection of art, sculpture, furniture and armour. Cost: £8.50. Meet at Southgate tube station, 9.15am sharp. For further details and bookings contact **Roy Barrows**. Once your booking's confirmed please send your cheque* enclosing a SAE for the return of your ticket to Roy's address.

Fri 7 – Mon 10 May 2010 – Normandy & D-Day landing beaches weekend break at Caen organised by the Forum with Crusader. A unique opportunity to visit the American, British and Commonwealth landing zones, beaches & cemeteries that commemorate 'The Longest Day 6 June 44'. Cost: £229pp Optional holiday insurance £24pp. £50 deposit secures your place. For bookings, room details and itinerary please contact **Roy Barrows**.

Mon 17 May 2010 – Lunch Italiano at Café Punto, 838 Green Lanes, Winchmore Hill, near to the old Green Dragon Pub. Join us at the delightful Café Punto for lunch and good fun. 2-courses at £10.90, drinks separate. Places are limited to 50. For details and bookings please contact **Olivia**.

Tue 25 May 2010 – Coach trip to Bletchley Park including entrance to the war-time decoding centre - cost £25. For details and bookings please contact **Bill Thear**.

Mon 23 – Fri 27 Aug 2010 – 5-day walking trip to Germany in the beautiful Eifel Hills. Cost: £275pp includes travel by coach & ferry or Eurotunnel, h/b accommodation, guided walks and wine tasting. This trip is suitable for anyone who has no serious health or mobility restrictions. Details and booking contact **Olivia**.

Thu 2 Sep – Mon 6 Sep 2010 – 5-day break in Istanbul, Turkey. **Come fly with the Forum!** Join us on our first flight to the exotic city of Istanbul, Capital of Culture for 2010, where Europe meets Asia in a vibrant and colourful melee of minarets, palaces and souks. For a full itinerary and bookings contact **Olivia**.

Please note: if you have to cancel your place on a Forum social activity/trip, we will make every attempt to fill your place. If this is not possible you may lose your booking fee/ deposit.

*All cheques should be made payable to: Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum

Contacts for social calendar bookings:

Polly Lawman: 020 8807 2076 - Forum Office
email: info@enfieldover50sforum.org.uk

Roddy Beare: 020 8292 4324

Roy Barrows: 020 8360 8561 72 Broadfields, N21 1AH
email: roycar1939@btinternet.com

Olivia Goodfellow: 8447 8841 email: olivia.g@virgin.net

Jean Mittins: 020 8367 2102 email: mercia211@talktalk.net

Sue Scott: 020 8368 0861 e-mail scotsf48@hotmail.com

Bill Thear: 020 8363 9216 46 St George's Rd, EN1 4TX
email: thear_242@hotmail.com

Solicitor Michael Stennett warns of pitfalls and problems in

Buying a retirement home

The other day the firm's estate agency department received instructions from Sally to sell her retirement flat. Sally was sorry to leave her flat at "Twilight Homes" because of the friends she made and its wonderful facilities including a residents' lounge, laundry room, and on-site house manager, but had to move to a residential home due to her increasing frailty.

We put Sally in touch with Fred and his wife Barbara who asked us to help them sell their property. They were in their late seventies and needed to sell their large house because it was getting too much to maintain. Twilight Homes charged £2,000 a year for services which were high compared with other retirement homes, but Fred and Barbara were prepared to pay them because they liked the facilities. However, they were concerned when we told them that under the terms of the lease a seller would have to pay the freeholders an "exit charge" or "assignment fee" equal to 1% of the sale price.

Our conveyancing solicitor challenged Twilight to justify the exit fee, when the lessee was paying annual service charges. The explanation given was the service charge covered the cost of building insurance, and for maintaining the building and common areas, whereas the exit fee was payment for future repairs and the extra facilities such as the house manager.

Worried that having to pay an exit fee would make it more difficult to sell her home, Sally complained to the Office of Fair Trading (OFT). The OFT upheld her complaint, ruling that the assignment fee was unfair because it caused a significant imbalance in the rights and obligations under the lease to the detriment of the lessee. The Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts Regulations 1999 say that a consumer is not bound by a standard term in a contract with a trader that is unfair. Twilight accepted the ruling and agreed to remove exit fees from new leases and not enforce them when existing residents sold a flat in its development. Happy with the decision Sally sold her flat to Fred and Barbara.

If you or someone you know decides to move to a retirement complex make sure your solicitor checks the lease to see if it contains a provision for exit fees. Examine the service charge accounts and find out from residents if they have complained to the freeholders about the yearly cost. Charges to residents for repairs and management must be "reasonable" and residents who consider them excessive can appeal to the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal.

Stennett & Stennett provide legal, financial and property services all under one roof and if you have a property to sell contact Elaine Beckford-Stennett for a free valuation.

Hearing aids *(cont from page 1)*

rises rapidly to one in two by the age of 60. Yet only 17% of all people with a hearing problem wear a hearing aid. Because the hearing aid manufacturers spend so much money on advertising in newspapers, you are unlikely to find any or much critical media comment about their methods - and so little praise for the fine and free NHS audiology service.

So we'd be interested to hear from Forum members about their experience with both NHS and private hearing aids and in particular about the Chase Farm audiology unit and private dispensers.

Audiology news from Chase Farm

Our waiting times are remaining at a steady level, with 65% of patients getting their hearing aid within three weeks of us receiving the GP referral.

This past year we performed 1,940 new assessments, this figure is for both new and existing patients requiring re-testing and fitting. Direct referrals from new patients totalled 1,080; self-referrals for existing patients 900. We also have the drop-in repair/maintenance clinics where we see around 5,200 people a year.

There is also our hearing therapy service that offers advice on environmental equipment as well as Tinnitus management programmes. We work in conjunction with the ENT department at Chase Farm and last year we performed 3,778 investigations as part of this service.

Two new Audiologists will be joining the team this month. One of the ways we hope to expand in the near future is to be able to get out into the community more. Rather than our patients having to travel to Chase Farm Hospital we would like to come to health centres around the area.

Another new service we offer is that of wax removal. In the past if a patient had wax we were unable to proceed with the appointment. This meant a waste of time and money for the patient as well as a delay in receiving their hearing aid treatment.

Now as long as the patient meets the criteria, we are able to remove it using a pro-pulse unit. This a pulsed jet of water that washes the wax out. It should be neither painful nor uncomfortable. It then means they can complete the appointment rather than re-book after the wax is removed.

While we believe we deliver a high class service we always know there is room for improvement and we are keen to improve the service we offer. As such, we are conducting a survey of our patients. If any of your members would like to complete this then they can request a survey form from the department or write to me with their views.

Keith Dunmore, Head of Audiology



Sponsored Walk in aid of Ruth Winston Centre,
Sunday 9 May, 10am-2pm, Broomfield Park
Details or to take part, phone 020 8886 5346
or visit website www.ruthwinstoncentre.co.uk



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A personal view Careless talk on two fronts

When I was a teenager some 70 years ago at the outbreak of World War Two, posters were displayed everywhere with the simple message: **"Careless talk costs lives"**. While I don't think that some of the careless talk around in this pre-general election atmosphere will cost lives, it does risk upsetting vulnerable, elderly people as I know from telephone calls and being stopped in the street and asked: **"what's going on"**.

Enquiries from anxious people followed the **Enfield Independent** on December 30 printing a letter from **Anna Athow, an executive member of Enfield and Haringey BMA division**, which claimed that Chase Farm Hospital **"is billed for closure"**. Politely and respectfully, I asked the BMA for the source of this information and although they contacted Ms Athow at least three times her silence was a clear case of careless talk needlessly causing distress.

The truth is there is no plan to close Chase Farm - changes yes, controversy yes, but no closure. So let's put that lie to rest.

Then there was the series of calls and emails around a petition to the Prime Minister **"to secure the future of the Freedom Pass"**, which some people thought it meant that it might be withdrawn - or changed in some way as to reduce its present wide ranging availability - and urging the Forum to oppose this threat.

The petition was created by **one Barry Macleod-Cullinane** and asked the **PM** to intervene to stop a cut of £29 million in Government funding to the London boroughs. I'd never heard of Mr Macleod-Cullinane but we now know who was pulling the strings behind the petition. A Mr Merrick Cockell sent an email to his friends on 31 December wishing them all a Happy New Year and adding: **"Secondly, we (London Councils Conservative Group) have put a petition on the No 10 website urging the Prime Minister to intervene to protect Freedom Pass....."**. Mr Merrick Cockell it transpires is the Tory chairman of London Councils.

So in my book this petition was nothing more than a party political stunt to embarrass the Government in this year of local and national elections. Our Forum's constitution firmly states we are a non-party political organisation which to me means we do not ally ourselves with any party political campaigns. That doesn't mean we do not use whatever power we have to defend the Freedom Pass and I claim we are second to none in our desire to protect and enhance this and all other gains we have made to raise the quality of life of older people.

The position on the Freedom Pass is complicated and hence it is easy for people to misunderstand. However, everyone should by now have applied for the new Freedom Pass to replace one that expires on 31 March. We are now getting a five-year pass which should allay fears that it is neither going to be withdrawn nor changed.

So you are not going to lose your Freedom Pass. All London Boroughs have been obliged to provide free travel to all their eligible residents since the present government passed the GLA Act ten years ago. The Freedom Pass is still guaranteed by the Mayor and the Greater London Authority, despite the attempts last year by some Lib-Dem and Tory MPs to scrap this guarantee.

In 2008/9 the government introduced a nationwide concessionary travel scheme costing over £200 million a year so that anyone holding a free travel pass from their own council is now able to use buses for free anywhere in England. London received £55.4 million under this arrangement to cover the anticipated growth in numbers from outside London coming to the capital and using our bus services.

The allocation of government money to councils has been a hit and miss affair since nobody could know what the take-up would be. Not surprisingly, some councils are having to subsidise more free travel fares and so a special extra payment grant is being made available by the government to these councils.

Instead of just dishing out more money - and piling up more debt - it seems to me that the government is looking at how to redistribute the money allocated for concessionary travel more fairly across the country. It appears to believe that London's £56.7 million given last year was too much and so it plans to cut the grant to £29.6 million in the coming financial year. Remember, until two years ago London received nowt from the government - the Freedom Pass was financed entirely by London councils.

London will still be left with much more money than it is spending on bus fares for people from outside London which was only £5 million in 2008/9. Indeed, the government estimates that in the last two years London has received around £100 million more than it spent on the new national concessionary scheme.

Enfield has some 40,000 Freedom Pass holders but because the cost of the Freedom Pass to the council is now based on how often the card is actually used - rather than paying a flat rate for each card - new technology enables each journey to be recorded. The council will benefit from this change being phased in over three years. When the change is complete, Enfield will be about £1m better off than if it continued to be charged on passes issued.

This still means that council tax payers in Enfield - which of course includes many pensioners - will be contributing £8.6 million to pay for the Freedom Pass scheme in the coming financial year - roughly the same cost as in 2008/9 and in all previous years - but over £1 million more than in 2009/10. The pertinent, legitimate and unresolved question raised by this airing of the Freedom Pass issue is whether London should get the full cost of the scheme reimbursed by government - as councils in the rest of England do.

But that would mean Whitehall paying over £200 million a year to Transport for London and when every day we are warned of belt tightening and cuts to come from whoever governs us after the general election. **I don't see that happening, do you?**

Which only makes the phoney petition over the Freedom Pass another case of careless talk by politicians more interested in scaremongering and distressing older people than in finding cross-party solutions to difficult problems.

Monty Meth

Cineworld Silver Screen
Southbury Rd
 Every Monday @noon for the over 50s
 £2.50 per person

March programme
15 March - Doubt
22 March - The Duchess

For more listings visit
www.cineworld.co.uk/cinemas
 or look for posters at Cineworld
 Enfield

**THE ALEXANDER
 OSTEOPATHIC CLINIC**
 STRUCTURAL OSTEOPATHY
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 FOOT PAIN CLINIC



OSTEOPATHY IS NOT JUST FOR BACKS!!
 It is a very effective way of treating almost all your aches and pains, so if you have any questions about your problem, or to book an appointment phone 020 8373 0435

Conditions Treated Include: Arthritic pain Hip and knee pain Disc prolapses
 Leg pain Foot problems Frozen shoulder
 Headaches Muscular aches and pains

For further information visit the clinic website at www.north-london-osteopaths.co.uk

It's time to pay your dues

In other words it's time to renew your membership of the Forum. Subscriptions for 2010 are now due and if you can send off the lolly as soon as possible, it will save a lot of chasing and hassle. The subs are due on April 1 and the good news is you can save money by again paying for two years.

That is £12 for individual members for two years; £18 for a couple; £30 for affiliated organisations. Life membership remains the same - £100 for individuals and £150 for couples.

The bad news is there will be a proposal at the April AGM to increase subscriptions from 2011. So you can neatly dodge that by paying in advance and you won't have to dip in again until April 2012. Many Forum members did in fact pay for two years in 2008 and this is a gentle reminder that they too are now due to pay again.

I want also to remind those of you who have yet to sign-up for Gift Aid to do so if you are paying UK tax. Everyone will have a chance at the April AGM of telling us whether the Forum is doing a worthwhile job and is good value for your subs money. You tell us that the Newsletter is much appreciated, but the cost of producing and posting it is unfortunately not covered by our income from subscriptions.

And with postal charges going up again in April, the income - expenditure gap will be even wider. Thankfully, much of the work is carried out by volunteers, but we still have to pay the printing and postage costs. In addition, we have two part-time staff members, phone bills to meet and catering for a large membership itself costs money to administer. Is the Forum value for your money?

Well, I'll just mention two of our successful campaigns - the community toilet scheme and the improvement in pavement repairs - both taken on board by the council following representations by the Forum. So I say we need you and you need the Forum.

We post this Newsletter to more than 2,000 homes in the borough - each envelope has to be hand filled and so I want to thank those of you who have been volunteer "stuffers" and helped us during the year. Some of you have been with us throughout the year - you know who you are. Others have just joined us at our bi-monthly social stuffing morning. I hope you will stay along with the stalwarts for the coming year. There is room for newcomers as well, so just ring the office 020 8807 2076 and speak with Polly or Jane and they will pass your name on to me. You will get a coffee as well!

Please remember to renew your membership - and do it now. Please write to me at: Enfield Over 50s Forum, Millfield House, Silver Street, London N18 1PJ.

Joyce Pullen, Membership Secretary



www.enfieldover50sforum.org.uk

Membership Application Form

Surname	
First Name(s)	
Organisation*	
Address	
Post Code	
Phone Number	
Email	

* Not applicable if joining as an individual or a couple.

(I/We/My Club) wish(es) to apply for membership of the Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum. Enclosed is a payment of (£6.00 individual membership; £9.00 for couples; £15.00 for Clubs). Cheques should be made payable to Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum. (Delete as appropriate). We invite members to register for two years at twice the above rates as this cuts down the administration burden. **Life membership is on offer at £100, £150 and £250** respectively for single, joint and club subscriptions.

How did you hear about the Forum or who introduced you?

Do you use Enfield Leisure Centres (yes/no) in which your membership card will be sent out asap.

The Forum encourages members to come forward and help in its administration, stuffing of envelopes, running of events, serving on sub-committees, representing the Forum on external bodies, advising and researching special interest areas, etc.. If you are interested in supporting us in this way please tick this box.

Also please indicate below if you have any special skills you are willing to use to support the Forum.

Donations

I am making the following donation to the Forum £..... to help defray running costs of the Forum. As a registered charity the Forum can collect gift aid on donations made. If you pay tax and have made a donation do you give us your permission to apply for gift aid on any donation made by you to the Forum(Yes/NO)

Signed

Please return this form to Joyce Pullen, Membership Secretary, Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum, Millfield House, Silver Street, N18 1PJ, or hand in at a Forum Meeting.

An introduction to computers

By popular demand the recent free introductory session on using a PC is to be repeated on Thursday

22 April at Millfield Bistro.

Contact Polly or Jane on 020 8807 2076 for details and to book a place. Lunch is available for £5.50.

Look on the bright side

Heard the one about the wine waiter who was asked to recommend a good wine.

"Why not try the Macon, sir?"

"Why", replies the customer, **"are you going to pour it over me?"**

Exposing sin

Examining the body of a man before cremation, the mortician came across the largest private parts he'd ever seen. **"I'm sorry",** he told the family. **"I can't allow Mr O'Sullivan to be cremated with such an impressive array, it must be preserved for posterity".**

The mortician stuffed it into his briefcase, took it home and told his wife he had something beautiful to show her. He carefully opened his briefcase and unwrapped the parcel. **"My God",** she screamed. **"O'Sullivan is dead".**

Can you believe it?

The Sunday Times reported recently that Manchester police became the first force to make all officers wear name badges. Lucky it wasn't Bristol; which had a female officer named Adora Dick.

Snow tale

A typing error by bank staff in Barnet caused much hilarity among customers yesterday. The Halifax in High Road closed at 3pm to avoid the worst of the snow and a sign was placed in the window: **"Due to severe weather conditions we are closed. We are sorry for any incontinence caused". - Barnet and Potters Bar Times.**

Marriage counselling

A husband and wife went to the Enfield branch of Relate for some help after 15 years of marriage. Asked what the problem was, the wife went into a passionate, painful and tearful tirade listing every problem under the sun. Neglect, lack of intimacy, emptiness, loneliness, feeling unloved and unlovable, an entire laundry list of unmet needs she had endured over 15 years

After allowing this to run on, the Relate counsellor got up, walked around the desk and, after asking the wife to stand, embraced and kissed her passionately, as her husband watched goggle-eyed and open-mouthed. The woman quietly sat down as though in a trance.

The counsellor turned to the husband and said: **"That's what your wife needs, at least three times a week. Can you do that?"**

The husband thought for a moment and replied: **"Well, I can drop her off here on Mondays and Wednesdays, but on Fridays, I go fishing".**