



Save our pensions - restore the RPI - sign our petition

The Government's decision to replace the Retail Prices Index (RPI) as the yardstick for calculating all future public sector pension increases - taken without any warning of their intentions in the run-up to last year's general election - will hit not just today's 11 million pensioners, but the millions of younger people looking forward to retirement.

Incredibly, this Government which sheds crocodile tears for our servicemen fighting abroad, is planning to cut their service pensions too. According to the Armed Forces Pensions Society (AFPS), switching the pensions calculator to the consistently lower Consumer Prices Index (CPI) will cost the average soldier £600,000 over a normal lifetime.

The AFPS says that a corporal, aged 28, who lost both legs in a bomb blast would miss out on about £587,000 in pension and benefit-related payment by age 70. And the 34 year-old widow of bomb disposal hero staff sergeant Olaf Schmid, who was killed in Afghanistan in 2009, would lose about £750,000 over her lifetime because of the change.

Disability benefits will also be cut by up to £285 a year affecting over three million people. In addition, the move to use CPI as the measure of inflation for uprating the basic state pension means that it will be about £76 lower in 2013/14 than it would be if RPI were used.

So there are very good reasons why the Forum has launched a petition to be sent to our two government- supporting MPs. It calls on Ministers to abandon plans to use the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as the measurement of inflation when uprating the basic and second state pensions, public sector pensions and many private sector pensions, and instead restore the use of the Retail Price Index (RPI).

This change, which will significantly affect everyone's income in retirement, will apply from April 2011 to State second pensions, public service pensions and some private occupational

pensions and from April 2012 to the state basic pension as well.

There is no doubt that this change sets all pensions and benefits on a permanently lower path when calculated over virtually any period of time. The Government does not claim that this is a temporary "all in this together" measure to reduce the financial deficit.

It is here to stay because Treasury officials have long seen the CPI as the weapon to reduce what they call the "burden" of public sector pensions and benefits. RPI has been the universally accepted marker for decades - until in 2003 the Government needed to compare our economic performance with other EU countries which use the harmonised index of consumer prices. But it was never said that it would replace RPI.

Remember how Mrs Thatcher's government in the 1980s ended the link between average earnings and pension increases? It meant that pensioners lost between 1% and 1.5% in their pensions every year on average - and the same trick is being played today.

So the claim made by the politicians that the earnings link will be restored next year is being undermined because earnings are targeted for a pay freeze. Changing from RPI to CPI to calculate rises is a double whammy which will ensure that pensions do not keep pace with price inflation and living standards.

Using CPI, which is historically at least 1% below RPI means a drop in income for millions of families and is being opposed by the Public Service Pensioners Council (PSPC), National Pensioners' Convention (NPC), Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance (CSPA) and Occupational Pensioners' Alliance (OPA) and by Age UK.

Monty Meth

Say No to CPI

March behind the Forum's banner to Hyde Park.

Join the nationwide rally against the cuts.

Saturday 26 March.

Assemble 12 noon St James Street, Piccadilly. Nearest station Green Park.

Look for the Forum's banner and Tony Watts.

Help us make the Freedom Pass safe

Bus services all over England and Wales are being savagely slashed, or even withdrawn, following massive cuts in government grants to local councils for concessionary bus travel. At a recent NPC conference we heard people ask: what use is the concessionary bus pass when we have no buses?

Here in London, we are more fortunate as the Freedom Pass remains intact for another year at least. We may even enjoy the current benefits until 2012 - the year of the next mayoral election.

But with all London councils facing reduced government grants for the next four years at least we have to be prepared for the Freedom Pass, as we know it, to come under attack. And with that possibility in mind we want to prepare the case for its defence here and now.

In particular, we'd like to know what special value you place on the Freedom Pass being available before 9am, Monday to Friday. How important is it to retain this facility? Can you provide some examples how having the peak-time Freedom Pass helps you, your family, the wider community? What would be the social cost if we lost it?

We also want and need to hear from you about the value of the Freedom Pass itself. The press attacks on the total concessionary travel package have started in a big way and they will mount

as government searches for new ways to save money. We need details of how the Freedom Pass is used for your voluntary work, for helping with child care, avoiding isolation - what would you no longer be able to do if the FP was lost - how would your life be changed if you had to pay for all fares?

Does having the FP encourage you to shop locally thus aiding local traders; does having it help to reduce using the car, thus causing less pollution and so help improve the environment? How do the decision-makers calculate an important benefit of travel concessions for the elderly in increasing their mental and physical health, by encouraging them to get out and about and participate in local affairs?

We think the maintenance of good health must obviously reduce costs to the NHS, which in turn must in part offset the cost of concessionary travel. Encouraging older people to travel at all times of the day must also improve the marginal cost of running both bus and rail services.

But what do you think? Please write or email your suggestions, views, experiences to the Forum office so that we are well prepared to repel the next attack on the Freedom Pass whenever it comes - as sure enough it will! Send to: Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum, Salisbury House, Bury Street West. Edmonton N9 9LA Tel: 020 8360 8743. Email info@enfieldover50sforum.org.uk

Sign up for Wills Week

Although our Wills Week from April 4 - 8 is still almost a month away we hear that appointment slots are fast filling up with Stennett and Stennett, the local firm of solicitors which supports the Forum.

This is probably the last chance this year of getting proper legal advice while taking advantage of the special reduced price offer available only to Forum members. The problem of people dying without making a will is still so widespread, that the BBC made a special BBC2 series called **You Can't take it With You**.

Death and paying taxes have always been said to be the only certainties in life. You can't do anything about dying and it makes sense to pay as little tax as you can. The trouble is we don't like talking about either. Particularly in families we don't like talking about leaving money to the kids or grandchildren, and we certainly don't like the idea of selling up to pay for long-term care.

There are ways of avoiding the worst pitfalls but plans have to be drawn up in advance and making a will while you are still "with

it" and healthy can save a lot of heartache for both you and your family later on. Making a will is important because it lets you say how your assets are to be distributed, can save inheritance tax, avoids family disputes and provides peace of mind.

It is also important to think about looking at your existing will to see if circumstances have changed and it needs updating. The importance of making a will is that it enables YOU to decide what YOU want to do with any property or savings - and each individual's circumstances will be different.

And your decisions have to be legally watertight hence the Forum has arranged **this special Wills Week** from April 4 - 8th at the offices of Stennett & Stennett in Winchmore Hill Road, N14 6PT (near Southgate Circus). To take advantage of this special price offer of £99 inclusive of VAT per Forum member per will - and that is a saving of over £100 on their usual charge - please call: **Stennett & Stennett 020 8920 3190 and mention the Forum wills offer. Please note that the S & S discount voucher carried in this and previous Newsletters cannot be used with this offer.**



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Triple lock pension guarantee fails in first year.....

Remember the politicians' bold claim when they introduced the **"triple lock"** hold over future pension increases? It was going to equal whichever is highest - either 2.5%, or match the link with average earnings or the prices index. What pensions minister Steve Webb was less keen to emphasise was that by prices, he meant the Brussels-inspired consumer prices index (CPI).

Come April 2011, the basic state retirement pension will be increased by 4.6%, exactly in line with the September 2010 increase in the retail prices index (RPI) when the rate for a single pensioner will go up from £97.65 to £102.15 - but the government intends this to be the last time RPI is used to measure the rate of inflation.

For many decades now our pension increases have been linked to the British (RPI) which in January showed that the cost of living was 5.1% higher than a year ago. The RPI is compiled by checking the prices of approaching 100,000 items in shops and gives a fairly accurate measure of the increase in the cost of living.

In January the CPI showed an increase of just 4.0%, - 1.1% less than RPI. This gap will almost certainly widen if, as widely expected, interest rates move away from their recent record low levels. The latest earnings index shows an increase of just 2.2% and no one expects a big surge in earnings with the clampdown on pay rises - even a two year freeze in some cases - in the public sector.

What all this means is that in the first full year of the coalition government we are virtually certain to see a fall in living standards deliberately imposed - and engineered - by the government. All arms of the so called "Triple Lock Guarantee" will fail to provide the 5% to 6% increase that will be needed in April 2012 to ensure our pensions keep pace with inflation. The shortfall could well be as much as 2%.

And this stands to be repeated year after year because CPI is consistently lower than RPI and it was introduced by the government precisely for that cost-cutting reason.

No wonder the Bank of England Governor, Mervyn King, said: "the squeeze on living standards is going to happen one way or another".

He knows that further increases in the cost of living are more than likely as the full effect of the VAT increase works through into shop prices - not all stores have yet passed on the increase. Petrol

seems to get more expensive almost by the day. With no price falls expected in the near future, the RPI will probably still be showing an increase of between 5% and 6% in September, the month used as a base for the April 2012 pension increase.

With the cost of living rising faster than wages and the UN even warning that food prices could rise by between 10% and 20% in the coming year, we are now told to prepare for an **"income recession"**. Wheat and maize are up 40%, sugar and butter prices are at a 30 year high and meat and fish are significantly more expensive than last year - so the outlook is not very bright.

Add to this the increase cost of energy to keep our homes warm and the experts are forecasting a **"punishing deterioration in living standards"** - which only reinforces the Forum's petition urging the government to at least drop the planned switch to the CPI link to pension increases which will only make the poor poorer.

.....and VAT goes up again

The increase in VAT from 17.5% to 20% affects us all. The 20% rate is the highest level in Britain's history. In the 1970s, when Vat replaced the old purchase tax, there was a standard rate of 8% and a rate of 12.5% for luxury goods. These were combined into a single higher rate of 15% under Mrs Thatcher in 1979.

This was followed by the increase to 17.5% in 1991 and as David Smith, economics editor of the Sunday Times, pointed out **"every VAT increase has been by Conservative Chancellors."**

VAT will be paid on pretty well all purchases of goods and services except household fuel, which is charged at 5% and **"basic foods"** and children's clothes which are zero rated. During World War2 **"basic foods"** were rationed but exempt from purchase tax though **"kiddies' treats"** such as crisps and chocolate were taxed.

This distinction is still in force so if you like chocolate, fizzy or alcoholic drinks expect the price to increase. Around half our spending goes on items bearing standard rate VAT so if you spend around £100 per week you will need another £1 or so just to stand still. To add to the misery the price of oil is hovering around the \$100 per barrel mark and is unlikely to drop while the Middle East turmoil persists.

John Ball

Forum vice-Chair, who before retirement was an economist in charge of government analysis of pensions.

Did you know?

- Every month 50,000 people reach the age of 50 and the over 50 population is now estimated to be 20 million strong in the UK
- Monopoly was invented in America in 1934 and its makers estimate that 500 million people have played the game worldwide - the longest recorded game lasted 70 days!
- More than 550,000 people have now received a free passport under the government scheme giving them to everyone born on or before 2 September 1929, in recognition of their efforts in the second world war.
- There are 1,514 doors and 760 windows in Buckingham Palace and all the windows have to be cleaned every six weeks.

Subscription Renewals

Those members whose membership subscription is due for renewal on 31 March should have received a leaflet informing them that their subscription is due with this newsletter. Members are reminded that renewals received after that date will be at the new subscription level of £7.00 for individual membership, £10.50 for joint membership and £17.50 for affiliates.

Members renewing before 31 March can do so at the current rates of £6.00, £9.00 and £15.00 respectively. If members wish to renew for two years the annual subscription will also be at the current rates. If members pay income tax and tick the gift aid box we can claim an extra 28 pence on every £1 from the Inland Revenue.

Always look on the bright side.....

Mistaken identity

Paddy had not seen his daughter for five years. One day, she surprisingly returned home to be greeted by an angry father. **"Where have you been all this time. Not a word from you, never phoned. Can ye not understand what me and ye Mither have been through?"**

Coleen burst into tears. **"I didn't want ye te know I became a prostitute"**, she blurted out. **"Ye what"** shouted Paddy. **"Have ye know shame, ye sinner, get out of here. You're a disgrace to this Catholic family."**

"Ok Dad", said Coleen. **"I only came back to give Mum this lovely fur coat and you the deeds to a new house by the sea, and a bond certificate for £100.000 together with the keys for a new Mercedes convertible - and for me little brither, there's a gold Rolex and £500 - and you and Mom can come anytime to stay on my new yacht moored at Monte Carlo."**

Paddy cooled down and just said: **"Now, what was it ye said ye had become."** Coleen, crying again, just said: **"I'm sorry, Daddy, all this time I've been a prostitute"**.

"Oh, Be Jesus! ye scared me to death, Coleen. I thought you said a Protestant! Now come here and give your old father a big hug and a kiss!"

Jewish humour

Leo Rosten, the great Jewish writer and authority on humour, listed as one of the characteristics of Jewish humour revenge over the oppressor by the use of guile or circumstance. This is such a story:

Joseph was sitting at the bar staring at his drink when a large, trouble-making guy steps up, grabs his drink and gulps it down in one swig and menacingly says, **"Thanks mate, whatcha gonna do about it?"**

Joe burst into tears. **"Come on, man,"** the moron says, **"I didn't think you'd cry. I can't stand men crying. What's your problem?"**

"This is the worst day of my life," Joseph says. **"I'm a complete failure. I was late to a meeting and my boss fired me. When I went to the car park, I found my car had been stolen and I don't have any insurance. I left my wallet in the cab I took home. Then I found my wife in bed with the postman and then my dog bit me."**

"So I came to this bar to work up the courage to put an end to it all. I buy a drink; drop a capsule in and sit here watching the poison dissolve; then you show up and drink the whole thing! But enough about me, how's your day going?"

Mr G: Cheese maker

"I'm leaving England to live in Israel!" Mr Goldstein suddenly announces to his family. **"And what will you do there?"**, asks his anxious wife. **"I've a brilliant idea, I'm going to make cheese,"** says Mr G. **"I'll be a cheesemaker."** **"So, what's so special about that. What will you call it?"**, asks Mrs G. **"Cheeses of Nazareth"**, says Mr G. **"Think of the millions of Protestants, Catholics, Methodists around the world, they'll love it!"**

Last wish

Mr G's friend Jacob Cohen was dying, his favourite son Benjamin was at the bedside. **"There's one last thing I'd like before I go"**, he says. **"Bring me a last piece of Mamma's lovely apple strudel."** Benjamin faithfully goes downstairs where Mrs Cohen is baking and then comes back empty handed. **"Sorry papa, but Mamma says there's only enough strudel for the funeral!"**

Don't mess with us

A vivacious but elderly lady decided to give herself a big treat by staying in one of London's poshest hotels. When she checked out next morning, reception handed her a bill for £250.00.

She exploded and demanded to know why the charge was so high. **"It's a nice hotel, but the rooms certainly aren't worth £250 for just an overnight stop without even breakfast."**

The clerk told her that £250 is the 'standard rate' so she insisted on speaking to the manager. He appeared and announced: **"this hotel has an Olympic-sized pool, a Michelin star restaurant and a huge conference centre available to use."**

"But I didn't use them," replied our elderly guest. **"Well, they are here, and you could have,"** explained the manager. He went on to say that she could also have seen one of the in-hotel shows with top entertainers for which it is famous.

"But I didn't go to any of those shows," she said. No matter what amenity the manager mentioned, she replied, **"But I didn't use it!"** The manager remained unmoved, so she decided to pay, wrote a cheque and gave it to him.

When he looked at the cheque he saw it was only made out for £50.00. **"That's right, I charged you £200 for sleeping with me,"** said the lady.

"But I didn't!" exclaimed the very surprised manager. **"Well, that's too bad, I was here, and you could have done."**

The moral: Don't mess with us senior citizens!

Bonkers

A north London crematorium is under threat of closure because too few people are dying. Healthy living has been cited as a main reason why Enfield Crematorium may be put up for sale by Haringey borough council. Officials said the facility had failed to meet the year's target for the number of cremations, 2,260, having come in at a paltry 2,070 - **Pharos International (official journal of the Cremation Society of Great Britain.)**

Another crazy crem. idea

Redditch Borough Council hopes to save £14,500 a year by using the excess heat from a crematorium to warm the swimming pool at a local sports centre. **"I think it is a bit strange and eerie"**, said a local funeral director.

(See: Triple lock fails page 3)

Do you enjoy playing with words? - then try these twists

Those who jump off a bridge in Paris are in Seine.

A backward poet writes inverse.

A man's home is his castle, in a manor of speaking.

Shotgun wedding: a case of wife or death.

A man needs a mistress just to break the monogamy.

A hangover is the wrath of grapes.

Dancing cheek-to-cheek is really a form of floor play.

Condoms should be used on every conceivable occasion! .

Reading while sunbathing makes you well red.

A bicycle can't stand on its own because it is two tired.

What's the definition of a will? (It's a dead giveaway.)

She was engaged to a boyfriend with a wooden leg but broke it off. With her marriage, she got a new name and a dress.

The man who fell into an upholstery machine is fully recovered.

He often broke into song because he couldn't find the key.

Every calendar's days are numbered.

A lot of money is tainted - It taint yours and it taint mine.

A boiled egg in the morning is hard to beat.

He had a photographic memory that was never developed.

A plateau is a high form of flattery.

Once you've seen one shopping centre, you've seen a mall.

Bakers trade bread recipes on a knead-to-know basis.

Acupuncture is a jab well done.

Get fit with Fusion for a longer life

Unlike some parts of the country where councils are closing leisure centres because of cuts in their government grants, here in Enfield it is full steam ahead with the £9 million investment programme to make our centres more attractive - and Forum members are now being offered a unique new deal to coincide with the March 31 end to free daily swims.

NHS Enfield estimates the cost of treating overweight and obese people is some £80 million a year - about one fifth of its total spend which could be put to better use if more people took up swimming and regular physical exercise at our leisure centres. Swimming benefits the body - and the health benefits it offers is worth the effort if it reduces the chances of illness.

Swimming can help your cardiovascular fitness and endurance. It does not help with bone density - you need do weight bearing exercise in the gym for that - but that is about all that is missing from what swimming could do for your fitness.

Why do we encourage you to swim? For the health benefits to your heart and lungs and for the chance to be with and make new friends at the pool. So here's the new package secured for Forum members - and this alone is worth your membership fee!

- Working together with the council and Fusion Lifestyles - the not-for-profit company that manages our leisure centres - Forum members are now eligible to buy the annual Enfield Leisure Centres Concession card for just £7.50. The benefits include half price access to most activities (listed below) including the exclusive and popular 50+ activity days at Edmonton, Southgate and Southbury leisure centres.
- This is a £12.50 saving on the usual concession card price of £20. The card can be purchased from the reception at any of the leisure centre's on production of a current, valid Over 50s Forum membership card.
- Members of the Over 50s Forum are also entitled to Enfield Leisure Centres' corporate membership and giving access at no extra charge to all facilities. This cost is just £37 per month, a £7 per month saving on the normal £44 per month price. There is also no joining fee payable representing a further saving of £35.

- For Forum members, annual membership is also available at the discounted corporate rate of £370 - a saving of £70 on the normal individual price. However, as a special incentive to regular swimmers coming to the end of the "freebies" we now have a special offer of annual membership for £320 - a further saving of £50, But this offer ends on April 30.
 - There's another bonus for Forum members in the decision by the council and Fusion to commence regular free swimming sessions twice weekly at Arnos pool only for 50+ Forum members (and existing 60 plus free swim card holders) on production of their membership cards. Commencing Tuesday 26 April 11am-12noon and Thursday 28 April from 2.30pm-3.30pm and the same times every Tuesday and Thursday thereafter.
- We know there are a number of Forum members who can't swim - they may be aquaphobic or had a bad experience learning to swim while at school. Well, in the belief that it is never too late to learn here's your chance to make up for lost time; help to get fitter and no longer miss out when everyone else on holiday is having a dip - and you are sitting it out!
- Fusion is now offering to run a course of adult swimming lessons for Forum members with trained Fusion teachers - probably on a group basis - at discounted prices depending on numbers. If you are interested, please tell the Forum office 020 8360 8743 and we'll come back with further details of what's on offer.
 - The first of the refurbished leisure centres will be on show anytime over the weekend of March 19 and 20 at the Southbury venue when you can get a free "taster" of the facilities that will be available there.
 - Forum members who buy the £7.50 concession card - a saving of £12.50 on the full price - will get 50% off a wide range of activities as follows:

	Full price	Concession price
Swim	£3.80	£1.90
Fitness session	£7.20	£3.60
Fitness class	£7.20	£3.60
Sauna & Steam	£7.20	£3.60
Over 50s Activity Day	£7.20	£3.60
Badminton Court	£11.00	£5.50

Stay younger for longer with Fusion & the Over 50s Forum

Your NEW benefits as a Forum member...

CONCESSION CARD ONLY £7.50 providing HALF PRICE access to many activities including 50+ Activity Days available at Edmonton, Southbury and Southgate. Normal price £20.

(Concession cards can be purchased at all leisure centre receptions)

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Southbury Leisure Centre 020 8245 3201

Aspire Sports & Fitness Centre 020 8364 2484

Southgate Leisure Centre 020 8882 7963

For full details of all activities and offers available to the Enfield Over 50s Forum in Enfield leisure centres enquire at reception and look out for the NEW Over 50s activity leaflet available soon

in all centres.



Dementia: how prepared are we to meet & beat it?

With one in 20 people aged over 65 in the UK alone now estimated to be suffering from some form of dementia - and a forecast that by 2025 it will embrace one million people - the worldwide costs associated with this medical condition now total an estimated and frightening £388bn.

With an ageing population these costs are set to soar even further. Based only on predicted increases in the number of people with dementia, by 2030 we could see an estimated 85% increase in costs (World Alzheimer Report, 2010). This growth will put additional pressures on public finances - and on the health service - whilst also increasing the demand for family home care..

So it is little wonder that dementia has been described as the most significant health and social care crisis of the 21st century. And that is one reason why our Forum devotes time to its prevention and the care of those suffering from it.

With one in three people over 65 in this country expected to die from it, dementia is of particular concern when the coming reorganisation of the NHS will mean that so much more responsibility for treatment will be in the hands of the local consortium of GPs - which inevitably means that with the nationwide abolition of primary care trusts, where you live and the services provided by the new consortium handling the purse strings will matter a great deal more than now.

In light of the above burgeoning figures for the numbers affected by dementia, all countries will need to increase their spending to meet the needs of growing numbers of patients, to improve early diagnosis, to try and find ways of increasing prevention and invest in research and development to improve treatment.

As always, Enfield Over 50s Forum welcomes the acknowledged need to improve and update local health services for older people. And the executive committee responded to a consultation on dementia by the Barnet, Enfield and Haringey mental health trust.

The absence of a coordinated strategy and service for the identification, treatment and management of increasing levels of currently undiagnosed dementia and cognitive impairment has been a matter of concern to our members for some time.

So we welcome the roll-out of a memory assessment service - particularly as other EU countries are ahead of us in the provision of memory clinics, which we regard as long overdue - but we are also seeking assurances that there will be higher levels of awareness, alertness and response to the condition among GPs than is evident at present.

While we recognise that, at this stage, there can only be the broadest of estimates of likely outcomes to improved treatment, we should like to know what forms of monitoring will be in place, and how outcomes are to be measured. Our view would be that analysis should not rest solely on a medical model but have a family and social function factored into it.

We have welcomed in principle the support being given to maintain dementia patients at home and we look forward to the development of an effective dementia home treatment team in the expectation that it should provide important support in acute episodes, as well as signposting sufferers and carers to other sources of help and to means of respite if carers are not to break down.

We have told the BEH mental health trust that our members are acutely aware of the immense pressure falling on those, often not young themselves, who must, without sufficient back-up or resources, care for continually deteriorating dementia sufferers.

While we can accept the proposal to move from three to two acute admission wards for "good housekeeping" reasons and for the treatment of short-term cases in readiness for discharge, we should like some rather more detailed evidence demonstrating that the capacity will be there given that both incidence and identification are ineluctably rising.

However, we are very alarmed indeed at the absence of any mention of long-term care. As a Forum we have been made keenly aware that there are some people, certainly a minority, who can no longer be cared for at home, their deterioration is too great, even where there is a loving and willing family.

Such patients are not accepted by private care homes as an alternative, even where the funds exist to pay. They can and do settle in permanent care, well provided at Silver Birches for example, and we need strong assurances that the patients who do fall into this category will have provision made for them, as it is in other EU countries.

BEH mental health trust should know that this is an issue of ongoing and very great concern to the Over 50s Forum and that we regard its acknowledgement and resolution as vital.

The Forum accepts the need for modernisation and savings where possible, cost-effectiveness and value for tax payers money. However, as citizens who have, by definition, paid taxes for longer than others, our emphasis and of central concern to us, must be the needs of older people, the quality of the service and its effectiveness for dementia sufferers and their families.

Vivien Giladi

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Join the Forum NOW

Until 31 March 2011 Subscriptions are £6 for an individual, £9 for a couple and £15 for an affiliate organisation. After March 31st subscriptions will increase to £7, £10.50 and £17.50 respectively.

Call the Forum office on 020 8360 8743 between 9.30am and 12.30pm and we will send you an application form. The Forum is currently based at Salisbury House, Bury Street West, but will be returning to Millfield House, Silver Street, early in May following completion of its refurbishment.

Your life in their hands

On one hand we are bombarded almost daily with dire warnings of disaster ahead under the government's reorganisation plans for the NHS. At the same time we read of bizarre ideas - such as the proposal from Health Minister Andrew Lansley, that your local Boots the Chemist could provide cancer sufferers with chemotherapy, or that many people will be able to email their GP instead of going to the surgery.

Crazy ideas are being bandied about, such as that patients with long-term conditions like diabetes or heart trouble could be asked to measure their own glucose levels or blood pressure and send them to the surgery - which for older people in particular would be disastrous.

"Need to book an appointment with your GP? just dial 111", ran one newspaper headline reporting that NHS Direct is in talks about handling appointments with GPs. Although some of these ideas are too hair-brained to survive examination, there is undoubtedly widespread concern being expressed about the future from virtually every sector of society.

More than half of GPs in a survey by the Royal College of General Practitioners said they were concerned that the NHS reform plans would not improve care for patients. The RCGP chair, Dr Clare Gerada, said that college members **"fear that these reforms could cause irreparable and irreversible damage to the NHS."**

And the internationally respected medical journal The Lancet, ran an editorial headed **"the end of the NHS as we know it"** which said the new health plans will cause **"the catastrophic break-up of the NHS"** and **"spells the end of the NHS."** Lord Robert Winston, called by The Times the **"fairy godfather of infertility"** whose mother, a former Mayor of Southgate left us the Ruth Winston centre for Over 50s, says the NHS reforms are **"disastrous"** and patients lives are at risk. **"There will be old people and people with chronic diseases whose medical care will be deficient and some of them probably will die as a consequence,"** he said.

Dr Lawrence Buckman, chair of the BMA's GP committee (the doctors' trade union) has warned that the Lansley proposals would see the poor, the elderly, infirm and terminally ill in large parts of the country losing out to richer patients who can shop around and demand the **"right"** to see a doctor. He added that the shake-up - the biggest in the 62-year history of the NHS - was fatally flawed as GPs will have to compete to attract patients.

There is, however, no stopping the Cameron-Lansley bandwagon and a recent survey of the first 25 GP consortia given "pathfinder" status is hardly more reassuring. The results show there will certainly be a greater role for the private for-profit sector with just six of the 25 planning to use NHS managers. The majority of the consortia plan to outsource tendering, contracts, referral management - as well as accounting and human resources - to the private sector which must inevitably mean that services patient receive will vary from place to place - a postcode lottery- depending on whom - and the competence of those engaged to help the various GP consortia.

Enfield Consortium

Nearer home we must be concerned at the fast rundown of the Primary Care Trust which, with all its faults, had many highly skilled and experienced commissioning managers, many of whom have been allowed to take voluntary redundancy. With the merger of five PCTs in Enfield, Barnet, Haringey, Camden and Islington we are likely to be left with a skeleton staff of 15 -20 people in NHS Enfield under the decision to cut administrative costs by 54%.

There will be a borough director (BD) but the Forum's ability to exercise any influence or pressure will be limited by the BD's own very limited accountability to the 300,000 people in the borough. Already, we have seen how Enfield PCT consultative groups are being wound up, such as the patients reference group

We understand that meetings of the National Service Framework for diabetes have already been cancelled with the comment that there is no need for such meetings now that the PCT is being wound up - and people are rightly asking how is the voice of local people going to be heard in the next two years before the consortium takes control in April 2013.

Faced with this barrage of opposition to the reorganisation, to which local GPs have had to acquiesce (reluctantly in many cases) as every GP has to be a member of a consortium, the Forum has taken a principled position of seeking to be involved in a constructive dialogue with the Enfield GP consortium representing all 61 surgeries in the borough.

On behalf of the Forum, **Monty Meth** and **Vivien Giladi** have met the consortium's steering committee - attended by 10 representative GPs for what they hoped will be a productive dialogue and relationship in serving the best interests of the Enfield community. Speaking as the representatives of over 3,000 members, spread throughout the borough, as well as some 60 different local organisations that are affiliated to the Forum, they stressed our common interest with the GPs since better health is our mutual concern.

They stressed the close understanding and relationship the Forum had with the PCT staff, having played a key part in many committee and in organising many events such as flu jab sessions, publicising falls prevention, breast and bowel cancer screening campaigns. And that we've held regular fitness days at the leisure centres around our campaign theme: **"get fit for a longer life"**

It is because we think this healthy lifestyle aspect of our work is so crucial, that we seek to maintain and sustain a strong and close relationship with the consortium, because they will be given the task of commissioning future patient services in Enfield.

The GPs were told that the Forum executive had discussed the massive NHS reorganisation and had read of the concerns that exist about the scale and pace of the changes being proposed - .concerns shared by the public at large - and by our members who read and see the warning: **"NHS reforms are a disaster...people will probably die"** that was in The Times.

Faced with this widespread concern, the Forum could have decided to stay on the sidelines and throw bricks at the consortium - that would certainly make for an easier life. Instead we decided that it is in the best interest of the people we represent to work constructively with the consortium.

The Forum has always been insistent and consistent in saying that primary care is our priority since GPs are the first port of call for people feeling unwell. We are concerned now to hear that primary care services in Enfield are not what they should be. Indeed, we are still told that more than 50 % of surgery practices in Enfield are below NHS standards.

Although some practices have recently merged, there will still be 31 single or double-handed practices by the time the PCT is abolished. And we understand there is still no GP practice in Enfield able to provide diagnostics from ultrasound facilities - and breast screening uptake here is still only 64% compared with 62.6% in 2006. We do not know whether by the time the PCT leaves the scene it will be free of debt, but we do know that more GPs are needed; that many surgeries still need to be upgraded to 21st century accommodation, equipped with facilities for modern primary care.

The firm message left with the consortium was that unless this is achieved we will never see the closing of health inequalities between the east and west of Enfield - in the 10-12 year difference in life expectancy between Edmonton Green and Highlands wards. It is only because the consortium and the Forum share the same interest in raising health standards, in securing a better and healthier life for our people that we offered to help and cooperate with them in any way we can.

Dental care: what the NHS can do for you

There is a widely held view that you can't find an NHS dentist, thus forcing people to pay very much more for private treatment - or worse, just neglecting their teeth. A Which? survey however revealed that a majority of people don't bother to try and find an NHS dentist. In fact, there is a list of 40 dental practices in the borough providing NHS treatment.

Last year the Forum participated in a consultation exercise which found that oral health is significantly better in Enfield than in London as a whole. But, as usual, there are parts of the borough with poor oral health and not surprisingly this is linked to the areas of deprivation, through poor housing, low incomes, high unemployment - all leading to depression and people neglecting themselves.

The worse the level of depression, the greater the need for treatment and this can be achieved by telling people where they can get NHS treatment and, most importantly, what they are entitled to receive under the NHS.

To get NHS dental treatment, just contact a practice providing NHS dentistry and ask for an NHS appointment. The majority of the dental practices also accept private patients. It is important to confirm with your chosen dental practice if you wish to be seen under NHS or privately.

To access the full list of NHS dentists go to the front page of the NHS Enfield website - or go directly to:

www.enfield.nhs.uk/local_services/az_services/dentists.shtm

Cost of NHS Dental Charges

Free NHS dental treatment or help with health costs

- Some people may get their dental treatment free. You do not have to pay if you are:
- Under 18, or aged 18 and in full-time education
- Pregnant or have had a baby in the past 12 months Or if you or your partner are:
- Receiving Income Support, income based Job Seekers allowance, Pension Credit or Pension Guarantee Credit.

- On low income and can claim for full or partial help (by completing an HC form available from Jobcentre Plus, NHS Dentists or on-line from www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk)

For more details to see if you qualify, call 0845 850 1166.

If you normally pay for NHS dental treatment, there are three standard charges (see below). The amount you pay will depend on the treatment you need. You will only ever be asked to pay one charge for each complete course of treatment even if you need to visit your dentist more than once to finish it - either Band 1, Band 2 or Band 3.

However, if you have to be referred to another dentist for a further course of treatment you can expect a second charge. Some minor treatments, including having stitches removed or repair to dentures (if they can be mended), are free.

Band 1 course of treatment £16.50 - This covers an examination, diagnosis (e.g. x-rays), advice on how to prevent future problems, and a scale and polish if needed.

Band 2 course of treatment £45.60 - This covers everything listed in Band 1 above, plus any further treatment such as fillings, root canal work or if your dentist needs to take out one or more of your teeth.

Band 3 course of treatment £198.00 - This covers everything listed in Bands 1 and 2 above, plus crowns, dentures or bridges.

Urgent treatment £16.50 - If you require urgent care, but your urgent treatment needs more than one appointment to complete, you will only need to pay one charge of £16.50. You can always get urgent care or be treated out of hours if clinically necessary. Ring your chosen dentist for details of the local urgent care service.

The more detailed 'Guide to NHS Dental services in England' is available from www.dh.gov.uk/dentistry <<http://www.dh.gov.uk/dentistry>>

Cot deaths are real

When the BBC soap EastEnders recently featured a controversial cot death storyline, it attracted more complaints from viewers than ever before. People said it was cheap sensationalism, offensive, cynical and ill-informed and was used just to get its audience figures up.

But that episode should not hide the fact that here in Enfield we have had the second highest level of infant mortality - that is deaths in babies and young children under the age of one year in London. While the majority of deaths in Enfield have occurred in babies who were born prematurely, several deaths locally were indeed linked with unsafe sleeping practices.

In 2008/9 there were nine cases of Sudden Unexplained Deaths in Infancy (SUDI) in Enfield. In two cases the babies were sleeping in their own bed and in the rest they were either sleeping with a parent or alone on a sofa or in a car seat.

So while most Newsletter readers are long past the pregnancy generation, as parents and grandparents to be, it is useful to remind ourselves of the importance of accessing health services as soon as pregnancy is confirmed to ensure the best health and social care for mother and baby.

Safer sleeping for babies is just one of the information points we have been asked to publicise by the Child Deaths Overview Panel who emphasise that the safest place for a baby to sleep is in a cot. For the first six months, it is best for the cot to be in a room

with the mother. Ideally baby's mattress should be new, but if this isn't possible it should be clean and dry.

The mattress should fit the cot snugly. The safest position for your baby to sleep in is on her back, **not** on her front or side. Baby should also be placed with the feet to the foot of the cot, with the bedding tucked in so that it can't wriggle down under the blankets.

Other points you may like to pass on include: Avoid sharing your bed with your baby if :

- Either parent is a smoker [even if you don't smoke at home]
- Either parent has been drinking alcohol or has taken drugs or medication which might cause drowsiness.
- Either parent is very tired.
- The baby was premature or of low birth weight (less than 2.5kg or five and a half pounds)

If parents do choose to have their baby sleep in bed with them, then be aware of the dangers of rolling over and suffocating the baby - or of her/him falling out of the bed or getting trapped between the bed and the wall

The good news is that as a result of this Enfield awareness campaign involving health visitors, midwives, social workers and others, the number of baby deaths in 2009/10 dropped to just four and there were none in the first six months of 2010.

Hearing aids: NHS or Specsavers-the choice could be yours

Under the Lansley reforms of the health service, the claim is often made that bringing in private-for-profit firms to compete with the NHS will **"drive up quality and efficiency."** And Ministers are fond of telling us that the competition they are proposing will be based on quality rather than price.

How they propose implementing this criteria is not explained when at the same time we are told that there will be no top-down contracts imposed by Whitehall on GPs - as there was by the last government. The decision on what services will be provided by the future NHS - and who will provide them - will be taken, we are also told, solely by the local consortium handling the Lansley money.

So when we hear that audiology is already very high on the reform agenda, being in the top five specialities when it comes to **"any willing provider"** that can supply the NHS, things are moving very fast indeed. We are told too that the quality of care and service provided by **InHealth**, the last private hearing aid provider to hit Enfield was disappointing, and that the biggest threat now comes from companies such as Specsavers.

In many areas of the country Specsavers already have contracts to provide NHS services and we hear it is their aim to become a major nationwide provider of NHS audiology services. This is something they have been carefully planning for many years and we've all seen their advertisements for two pairs of glasses and a free hearing test etc.

And the Forum has dealt with complaints against private companies that provide hearing aids for nearly £4,000 that do not work and then we find they won't listen to requests for a refund.

Because hearing loss is an inevitable factor in the ageing process, older people are going to be bombarded in the months to come with expensive full-page advertisements in the national press. You will read about the **"digital hearing aid information service,"** and an offering of **"special pensioner hearing aids"** from Hidden Hearing, or there's the **"powerful secret hearing device"** from the UK Direct Shop in Brighton.

Before you fall for their blandishments paying thousands of pounds for hearing aids that the NHS will prescribe free, we draw your attention to the results of an undercover investigation carried out by **Which?**, the consumer watchdog, backed by the **Royal National Institute for Deaf People** and reported in The Times.

Which? sent 12 researchers with hearing problems into High Street hearing aid shops and they discovered that the shops were making false claims about NHS aids. Several researchers said they were shown only large and ugly NHS aids, far removed from the range now available.

"One researcher was told that NHS aids were 'ancient' and that it could take many months - or years - to go through the system, when the average wait from GP referral to treatment is less than five weeks", reported The Times.

This is certainly the case at the Chase Farm audiology unit where experience shows that not only is GP referral to being fitted speedy and efficient, but the after-care service is first rate. So it does not surprise us that the Chase Farm unit has recently won the audiology contract for Barnet Hospital. They are also very keen to provide hearing aid clinics at the North Middlesex and Potters Bar hospitals, to save patients travelling to Chase Farm

But in two years time the local GP-led consortium will have immense powers and patronage. And we will insist that if **"quality not price"** is to be the criteria, then the NHS audiology unit must be the chosen provider.

To support our case we will quote the following letter which recently appeared in the Enfield Independent:

Hearing aid cost covered

I've just received the latest Yellow Pages and enclosed with it was a leaflet advertising "low cost" hearing aids for pensioners.

A few weeks ago I was referred by my GP to the audiology department at Chase Farm Hospital, where my hearing was tested and I was supplied with a hearing aid within the hour.

The testing and the supply of the hearing aid cost me nothing beyond taxes I paid during my working years. The hearing aid is so unobtrusive that even my grandchildren haven't noticed it and it works perfectly.

I hope that others whose partners complain that they can't be heard have their hearing tested by the NHS and avail of its services. I'm not ashamed of being slightly Mutt 'n' Jeff. But I'd be very embarrassed if I were proven a mug by those who would make pensioners pay for services and goods to which their contributions during their working years have already given them entitlement.

Donald Kennedy

Census Day is 27 March 2011

The census collects information about the population every ten years. Your census questionnaire will be delivered to your home during March. Completing and returning your questionnaire is required by law. You should complete and return it in the envelope provided immediately after March 27. If you prefer, you can complete your census questionnaire on-line at **www.census.gov.uk** (you will receive an internet access code, unique to your household, with your census questionnaire).

Your census answers are confidential. Personal information is never shared with other national or local government departments. The information collected is kept confidential for 100 years and is protected by law.

By taking part, you will help identify the services and facilities that you, your family and our local community need. These include schools, hospitals, housing, transport and emergency services. All sorts of decisions are taken based on census statistics, from the number of car parking spaces needed at local shops to the allocation of fire engines. The numbers of school places, development of traffic systems, provision of care homes and funding for local authorities are all heavily influenced by the census.

Completing the census is straightforward and it will help your community to be recognised and also help national and local governments to plan to meet the needs of your community. Most questions can be answered by simply ticking a box. If you would like additional help, there will be a telephone helpline 0300 0201 101, an explanatory leaflet (which is available in many languages) and the census website (**www.census.gov.uk**). Braille and large print copies of the questionnaire will be available via the website and text relay, for people with hearing problems, help will be via 18001 0300 0201 160.

Every member of your household, including all babies and children, should be included on your completed census questionnaire. Collectors will call at those addresses where no completed census questionnaire has been returned.

By completing and returning your census questionnaire, by post or on-line, you will help Enfield plan for the future and you will know that you have played your part in helping to shape the future of your community.

Polly's Patter...

Our "big society" is here!

I keep reading how the so-called big society is all washed up and is dying a death caused by government cuts. Politicians say they don't know what the big society is, and the leader of Britain's largest volunteering charity, Community Service Volunteers, says the government is in danger of destroying the UK's volunteer army.

Well, our over 50s volunteers are doing the "big society" for themselves. All I can say is that it has been a pleasure working with our volunteers, they are exceptional people. They are bringing a wealth of skills, expertise, new energy and ideas to the Forum and are ensuring its future and wellbeing.

Do they get something back? Well, I think so – in their own words: **'I do not want to lose my skills now that I'm retired'; 'I'd like to give something back to the community – I feel so lucky'; 'I have time on my hands and would like to learn new skills'; or 'it'll get me out of the house, TV programmes are dreadful nowadays'; 'I enjoyed helping out at the conference, I felt very useful.'**

January and February have been very busy months fine-tuning and embedding our own volunteers training programme. It kicked off on 2 February with five introductory sessions attended by a total of 20 volunteers. On 2 March they all successfully completed the first part of the training.

The second part of the programme is already in place – it is planned that 12 volunteers will spend a couple of mornings working in the office to get hands-on experience; others will be guided by committee members and will be getting involved in the running of the Forum. The third part is a three-month trial period where volunteers will get a taste of being on 'the front-line' – help will always be at hand.

The result of this work is that we already have the volunteers we need to cover the extended office hours Monday and Tuesday 12.30 – 3pm - starting date: Monday April 4 - 'a service by people over 50, for people over 50'.

Southgate and Oakwood Townswomen Guild

Before my visit to the Southgate and Oakwood Townswomen Guild, I checked the Townswomen's Guild website to find out more about them. Their members are described as 'discerning individuals with great concern and passion for their communities ... excellent networks ... they get things done.'

The meeting exceeded expectation – it was informative, full of fun and goodwill. This is a vibrant, well organised, friendly and inclusive social group involved in a variety of activities – day outings, bring and buy table-top sales, yearly holidays, contribution to charities, games, card-making to mention a few.

They invite speakers who are experts on a variety of subjects – and of course, there's a lovely cup of tea and biscuits at every meeting. A yearly programme outlines the Guild's social events and a very warm welcome awaits every newcomer. Why not try it out? You won't be disappointed. Taster sessions are free. For more information phone Mrs Doris Degaute on 020 8886 0021.

Educate, inform and entertain

No, not the BBC but the WEA in Enfield. Norma Chapman from the WEA (Workers' Educational Association) kindly invited me to attend one of their Art History sessions. The tutor, Mark Banting, was excellent; he talked about early 20th century art movements such as Avant Garde, Vorticism, the café culture of Bloomsbury and the ideas of the Camden Group.

Mark showed a collection of famous and obscure paintings and combined the visual splendour of the works with readings of poetry and prose giving a taste of the era. To look is not to see but

We are your sword and shield

Our Forum can rightly claim many achievements in sustaining and improving the quality of life of older people - from more pavement repairs to the community toilet scheme - from the fight to maintain the freedom pass to negotiating special rates at the leisure centres. But as our new life president, Monty Meth, said at our January meeting, faced as we are with massive changes everywhere we turn, our Forum is needed now more than ever.

And as you can see in this Newsletter, we are seeking to defend our gains and, most important of all, we are at the forefront in ensuring that our local health service will continue to provide the care and the treatment to everyone in the borough, whether they live east, west, north or south. We really are your sword and shield.

With more than 3,000 members and some 60+ local affiliated organisations we are a voice to be reckoned with. So when we say to the decision makers "**don't talk about us, without us**", they know we mean it. But this in turn means that you have to play your part - don't just leave everything to the Forum's voluntary officers who give their time and energy to fight for all of us.

I notice the bulbs are now coming through heralding the Spring so, now is the time for those of you who need to renew to **spring** into action with your cheque book. There will be a separate renewal form with this Newsletter. We will then be able to **spring** into action, revitalised with the response you are going to make. You will once again have the opportunity to renew for two years or take the life membership option.

This has been a good year with an ever growing membership now reaching over 3,200. Included in that number are 58 Life Members 63 affiliated organisations. Your donations continue to come in for which we thank you so much. You continue to volunteer and on that note, we do need a few more women on our Committee - anyone out there who would like to step forward?

Finally, coming to the end of yet another financial year I would like to say thank you to all who have helped us with the stuffing of the Newsletter, membership / office administration, events, social committee for all their work. In fact everyone who has helped the Forum.

So what am I asking you to do NOW is make sure you are a Forum member for the coming year. You can best do this by looking at the colour of your membership card and if it is blue, pink, white or pale blue then no subscription is due from you. But if it is any other colour then I plead with you not to put it off for another time - but send in the renewal form that is in your hands.

I estimate that there are more than 1,000 individuals and couples who need to renew their membership, so just imagine what an immense job this is for me and my team managing the membership data base. So please save me from nagging you any more, don't delay, get that cheque book out and if you can sign up for two years it will save me chasing you again next year.

Joyce Pullen

Membership secretary

continued from previous column

at the end of the session I felt able to see and take in some of the hidden beauty of the paintings. The venue at the Enfield Baptist Church is friendly and convenient, the coffee break enjoyable and the course members sociable and welcoming.

There is a highly recommended variety of courses for all levels, including art, music, literature and film studies. For more information please contact Norma Chapman 020 8882 0615 chapmanhnc@aol.com or Shirley Sandford on 020 8882 0207 shirley@sandfordsa.freereserve.co.uk. WEA's website is worth a visit: www.london.wea.org.uk

continued foot of next column →

Polly Lawman Development Officer

From the Chair's chair Welcome to new affiliates



Let's all become NHS vigilantes

Finding a theme for this column always sets me a task. It is one with which I am familiar. When studying for my Open University degree the most difficult thing was getting underway – first the theme - then that crucial first sentence/paragraph to set the tone and it almost writes itself. However, this time I was truly in a quandary – almost too many ideas rushing around my head – which to choose and how relevant my choice? Brain games, IT for the older person, care homes, transport and so on until it hit me between the eyes.

At our last Forum meeting in the Civic Centre, at the end of "Your Shout" Monty Meth made an impassioned plea about the NHS. He asked that each one of us should be vigilant about what GPs will do and to let us know if their service to you is not what you expect. I strongly supported him and reiterated his plea. The Forum is not a Political organisation but its charitable status allows us to campaign on political issues that we believe affect us as citizens. (Note the big "P" and the little "p".)

The changes to the NHS that the coalition government is going to press through are truly seismic. People on all sides of the political spectrum, including those working in the health economy, are not just concerned but aghast at its implications for "privatisation through the back door", a reduction in standards, choice and quality of outcome for patients.

It will become a scheme where any private firm as one of "any willing provider" can tender to provide services – this will open up the NHS to European competition law, confusion and bureaucratic costs. Even the Tory MP and GP Sarah Wollaston, described it as "throwing a hand grenade into the NHS". I hope she votes against the bill!

Looking back to the last General Election in May 2010, does anyone recall from either the Conservative or Liberal Democrat manifestos that this revolution was proposed? Do any of us recall being "consulted" about this? David Cameron wrongly describes it as "evolution"; but his proposals bear no relation to Darwin. His ideology of the NHS does not grow out of, or "evolve" from the existing body it is a gross distortion of Beveridge's vision and a manifestation of sophistry that beggars belief.

Our 200 local GPs working in all 61 surgeries in Enfield had no real alternative but to sign up to the new reforms and they have agreed to join a single consortium that will control all local patient health services from April 2013. I'm pleased to say that the Forum has already discussed its concerns with the consortium, but I ask you all to be vigilant as the changes evolve, to let us know about them.

Ask your GP how they see the NHS in light of this revolution – are they happy to have £80 billion thrust in their hands – for THEMSELVES to be held accountable and not the government should they fail?

Irene Richards

FREE BOWLING

Learn to play bowls free during May
Make new friends as you learn. Bowls supplied.

Enfield Town Club (Bowls Section)
Old Park Avenue

Call Peter or Theresa on 020 8360 6587
email theresacotes@aol.com

Arnos Bowling Club

Contact: Ms Rosalyn Mogilner

Tele: 07990 535993 E-mail: r.mogilner@sky.com

Season starts 23 April and runs to the end of September. Try free coaching sessions. Open 7 days a week. Beginners welcome Tuesday to Friday 2.30pm and Tuesday and Thursday 5.30pm The Club ground is in Arnos Park. There are several entrances, but the most direct ones are from Waterfall Road or Brookdale.

The Ladies Friendly Group

Contact: Joan 020 8363 6242

Meet at 7.30pm - 10pm Thursday evenings at St Helier Hall, 12 Eastfield Road, EN3 5XF. Activities include: outings, walks speakers quizzes, games etc. New members always welcome.

Edmonton Camera Club

Contact: Peter Hunt, 6 Radnor Gardens EN1 3RH

petpau@talktalk.net or 020 8363 1568

The club has 33 members and meets most Mondays at Angel Community Centre Raynham Road N18 2JF 7.45pm - 10pm but will be returning to Millfield House on completion of refurbishment. Web site www.edmontoncameraclub.co.uk

Abraham Lewin Unity Lodge

A warm welcome too to the **Abraham Lewin Unity Lodge of B'nai B'rith**, the oldest continuing Jewish welfare services organisation in the world, founded in New York in 1843 and now 100,00-strong in 50 countries.

Enfield National Trust Association

Contact: Peter Hunt on 020 8363 1568

The ENTA is a voluntary organisation with just under 500 local members and non members of the National Trust. They hold two meetings each month, one afternoon and one evening between May & September which are friendly, social occasions with usually an illustrated talk. They also organise summer, London, concert and theatre outings.

Visitors are welcome to the monthly meetings for a fee of £2 and members of the National Trust may join the Enfield National Trust Association for an annual subscription of £10 for one person or £16 for a family at the same address.

Local tennis leagues

Contact: Sally or Nigel on 07503281732 or Email

localtennisleagues@gmail.com

Whether you are a beginner, a weekend warrior or an advanced player there is room for you in these sociable mixed sex singles leagues, based in and around Bush Hill or Broomfield Parks.

We email contact details of the group you will be playing in and you get about five or six matches to play over eight weeks. Players arrange matches at a mutually convenient time, which means it is totally flexible - you play when you want (and if you would be interested in doubles, please let us know).

There are rewards and prizes! Everyone who completes three matches by the half way point is posted free tennis balls and the winner of each group receives £20 plus a certificate. Entry is £10 online at www.localtennisleagues.com/broomfieldpark/joinnow or www.localtennisleagues.com/bushhillpark/joinnow.

Next round commences Saturday 7 May to Friday 1 July, 2011, closing date: Wednesday 4 May, 2011.

Published by Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum.

Contact: The Secretary, Salisbury House, Bury Street West, Edmonton, N9 9LA. **Tel:** 020 8360 8743

E-mail: info@enfieldover50sforum.org.uk
Web site: www.enfieldover50sforum.org.uk

Affiliates News

Southgate Symphony Orchestra

Special 50th anniversary concert

Symphony No.2 in B minor Borodin

Piano Concerto No.2 in C minor Rachmaninoff

Prelude:Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg Wagner

Piano soloist: Masa Tayama

"a rare and extraordinary virtuoso" Mikhail Viskresensky,
Moscow Conservatoire

Saturday 9 April, 7.30pm

Bourne Methodist Church, The Bourne, Southgate N14 6RS

Adults £11.00, conc.£9.00 at the door, or £8 to Forum members inc. prog, and refresh.if tickets bought before the concert from the office or **Monty Meth** 020 8882 1303.

WEA: Enter the world Shakespeare knew

Join the new WEA five week course, Fee £34.

The theatre of early 17th century London

Tutor: Patricia Melville

starting Tuesday, 26 April, 2011, from 10-12 noon at the **Enfield Baptist Church, Cecil Road, Enfield.**

Also look out for the Day School, 30 August,

Charles Dickens and his works, and the main courses starting in September in Enfield and Southgate including the new twenty week course, **The English Civil War**

More details: **Norma Chapman** 020 8882 0615 or Shirley Sandford 020 8882 0207 or www.london.wea.org.uk

The Winchmore Singers

If you enjoy singing why not join our ladies' group? We extend a warm and friendly welcome to any lady who enjoys singing in pleasant company. We meet every Tuesday morning 10.15am – 12.15pm at the Guide Hut of St. Thomas' Church of England, Prince George's Avenue, Oakwood N14.

The Choir has a varied repertoire from classics to songs from the shows and is trained by a professional conductor – Jean Hornbuckle. **No audition is required.**

Further information from **Margaret Redman** 020 8367 1355 or

Mary Fouracre 020 8367 4201.

Cockfosters Bowling Club

Chalk Lane, Cockfosters

Welcomes New Members

Don't wait for retirement to take up this sociable and healthy activity. It is an enjoyable game for all age groups and we are starting the 2011 Bowling Season with three free Open Days and everyone is welcome:

Thursday, 28 April - 5.00pm. to 7.00 pm.

Saturday, 30 April - 10.00am. to 12noon with Coffee Morning:

Sunday, 1 May 10.00am. to 12noon

Wear flat trainers and our instructors will take you on to the green for a session. Just turn up, phone or e-mail for further information: **David Southon:** 020 8368 2348 at.burgess@tiscali.co.uk

STOP!



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Soc-com's open evening success

The Forum's social committee's (soc-com for short) first open evening was a rip-roaring success with nearly 60 people present at the Civic Centre for a drink, nibbles and a free-for-all chat which produced some fine ideas for future activities - and expanding the Forum's influence..

Roddy Beare, the soc-com chair, kicked off the proceedings in his usual jovial way, getting everyone in the mood to relax and speak their minds. Among the ideas that flowed were making another visit to the Olympic site; having a Forum rep. at the leisure centres on Over 50s days; getting more information about the Forum into GP surgeries in addition to the Newsletter - and importantly holding some Forum events in the evening for members still working.

There were offers to help organise a visit to the Palmers Green Mosque; to help the Forum strengthen its presence in Edmonton; offers of help in the Forum office; and to work closer with BEVAD - the Borough of Enfield Voluntary Association for the Disabled - with the aim of involving more disabled people in our activities.

During the course of the evening at least two people said they would join the Forum and the ideas that flowed will certainly produce further gains for the Forum - not least in showing what a friendly group of people we are. Not surprisingly, there was wide appreciation for soc-coms work - all carried out by volunteers who as well as broadening the appeal of the Forum, help to raise funds for many good causes.

Charitable work

The Forum is not a self-interest group. It has long believed in and practised helping others. For example, on 21 February some 36 members of the Forum had a wonderful meal at **The Taste of Raj**, Indian restaurant. Everyone enjoyed the good selection of food, drink and most of all the company. Soc-com stalwart Roy Barrows would have been hosting the event, but as his wife, Carol, was in hospital, Roddy Beare had taken on this event.

Roy, always has a raffle at these events with the proceeds going to a good cause. So on this occasion the Helen Rollason Cancer Charity was chosen, because Carol is receiving treatment at their North Middlesex Cancer Support Centre - and they received £128 raised by the Taste of Raj diners and sent with the Forum's wishes that Carol makes a full recovery to good health.

Largely due to Roy's tenacity and initiative, the Forum has also sent £580 to the Help for Heroes fund and £706 to SENSE, the blind and deaf charity - and judging by the success of the open evening, there's more donations in the pipeline.

Jacky's postscript

We all appreciate the fine contribution that Jacky Pearce makes to the successful soc-com lunches, and she tells us that **"once again some 80 Forum members have enjoyed the warm hospitality of the Conservative Club in Enfield.** After our great Christmas lunch there, we went back in January to be treated to a delicious three-course lunch carefully prepared by Rosario and his team.

"What a lovely surprise it was when Rosario arranged for us to have Danny's Disco play for us with his compliments to thank our members for their support over the last few years. Judging by the phone calls that I've had you all thoroughly enjoyed yourselves, dancing the afternoon away after a great meal. Thanks for taking a moment to contact us with brilliant feedback. Watch out for the next one - Remember book early!"

Jacky

Please make cheques payable to:
Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum
and enclose a SAE and your phone number.

FORUM Meetings

Thursday 10 March 10am for 10.30 start
Community House, 311 Fore Street, Edmonton
Helen Price of Enfield Voluntary Action, talks about
"Supporting volunteers and volunteering in Enfield".

Tuesday 15 March 10am for 10.30 start
Skinners Court, 1 Pellipar Close, Fox Lane
Members Matt Moore and Tony Watts, talk about
"Unusual, exciting and enjoyable activities".

Tuesday 29 March 10am for 10.30 start
Civic Centre, Silver Street
Ray James, LBE director of Health and Social Services
talks about *"Living with the cuts: the changing face
of social services in Enfield"*.

Thursday 14 April 10am for 10.30 start
Edmonton Leisure Centre, 2 The Broadway,
Edmonton Green, N9 OTR
Suzanne Johnson of the LBE Council Place Shaping
Team discusses *"The New Edmonton"*.

Tuesday 19 April 10am for 10.30 start
Skinners Court, 1 Pellipar Close, Fox Lane
Pamela Wells talks about *"Quality and care in resi-
dential homes"* and **Dawn D'Angelo**, Manager of Skin-
ners Court, will give a tour and talk about *"what Skin-
ners Court has to offer."*

Tuesday 26 April 10am for 10.30 start
Civic Centre, Silver Street
Clr Del Goddard, LBE Cabinet member for regenera-
tion leads a discussion on *"Making Enfield a better
place to live. Can it be done in these tough times?"*

Poetry Group's flying start

The Forum's Poetry Group made a flying start at its new Enfield Town Library venue in January when 21 people attended, including two new members. Since the last meeting one well-loved member, John W. Wilkinson, who was a published poet, had died. As a token of our respect, the meeting opened with the reading of a short verse in the format of a Welsh Englyn (which demands a set pattern of syllables, rhyme and alliteration and conveys a message in a pithy manner) followed by a minute of contemplative music.

The new location makes it easier for those members who live on the eastern side of the borough to attend. In order to make it easier for people to hear more clearly it is planned to experiment with the seating arrangements and thus maintain the family atmosphere that has been cultivated over the past three years.

Further meetings will take place at the Enfield Town Library between 10.30am and 12 noon on the following Thursdays:

17 March (theme - Humour with David Blake leading)

14 April (theme - Weddings, etc.)

19 May (theme tba)

Social Calendar

Tuesday 29 March - Book Club.

Enfield Library 10.00.a.m. Book - The Colour of Law by Mark Gimenez. Please feel free to come to the meeting, but try and read at least some of the books chosen, so you have something to say. Any further information, please phone Sue 020 8368 0861 email scotsf48@hotmail.com

Wednesday 13 April Brick Lane Music Hall - A traditional Music Hall, with a 3 course lunch. Meet your coach at Lidl/Argos, Enfield Town at 11.15 a.m. for a prompt 11.30.a.m., start. Back at 6.15. p.m. approx. At present this trip is FULL, however, if you would like to place your name on a waiting list, ring Jacky Pearce on 0208 482 3575 or e mail jackypearce@blueyonder.co.uk

Wednesday 20 April - Day visit to Highclere Castle, Newbury. This trip is now full. To be put on the waiting list please contact Lorraine Murray, 0208 805 3506

Wednesday 11 May - Train Trip to York. CANCELLED

Due to an exorbitant increase in fares by East Coast Main Line, the Social Committee has decided to cancel the trip scheduled to go to York. Contact Bill Thear: 020 8363 9216.

Saturday 18 June - Tour of Tottenham Marshes.

Come and join our guided tour of Tottenham Marshes and see for yourselves some of the wildlife that lives there. Bring binoculars if you have them - otherwise there may be a few pairs available to borrow. Meet at Enfield Civic Centre at 10am. Cost £10.00 to include guided tour, transport to the Marshes and back to the Civic Centre. Places are limited so book early to avoid disappointment. To confirm your reservation call Jean Mittins on 0208 367 2102 or email: mercia1211@talktalk.net.

Wednesday 3 August - Colchester and Constable Country trip

Join us on a day of history and culture on this two part trip firstly to Dedham Vale in the heart of Constable country. We have a blue badge guide for the whole day, whose knowledge of this area, including Flatford Mill and of the paintings of John Constable are second to none. As this is a summer trip, you can either bring a picnic or eat somewhere delightful in Dedham. After lunch it's on to Colchester, Britain's oldest recorded town. Cost including entry to the castle and driver tip is £25.00 per person. For a booking form, please contact Olivia on 020 8447 8841 or oliviaharrod@virginmedia.com.

Tuesday 20 September - Discover stunning Croatia!

Washed by the sparkling waters of the Adriatic sea, Croatia has one of the most beautiful coastlines in Europe. This warm and welcoming destination is our choice for next September and we welcome you along on the Travelsphere trip full of historical and cultural heritage. This is an 8-day holiday with lots of optional excursions, including Venice and the Lipica stud farm which breeds the famous Lipizzaner horses.

For full information, an itinerary and booking forms contact Olivia on 020 8447 8841 olivia.harrod@virginmedia.com

Freedom Pass guided walks and visits.

17 May - London Walk to Bloomsbury & the Literary Quarter

22 June - London Walk to Old Hampstead Village

July 2011 - Visit to Kenwood House for a guided tour and picnic, weather permitting. If inclement, lunch will be at the Brew House Cafe adjacent to the house (lunch optional). I am looking for expressions of interest: we need 15 - 20 people for each of the walks to make them happen.

The guided walks last about an hour and a half to two hours and usually end in a pub for a well-earned drink. Good mobility is required, sturdy footwear and bring a waterproof just in case. Contact Polly Lawman at the Forum Office 020 8360 8743.

Forum backs new campaign to end loneliness

"It's really good to have a local organisation already linked with us so early in our life," said Laura Ferguson, director of the new campaign to end loneliness launched last month, in welcoming the support of our Over 50s Forum which has long recognised the link between loneliness and poor health.

Loneliness in older people is as great a threat to health as smoking and as much of a threat as obesity. A YouGov poll carried out by the Campaign - which is funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation - found that fewer than 1 in 5 people have ever seen or heard information about loneliness as a health risk.

Research shows that one in ten older people feel lonely which can impact on their physical and mental health causing depression, which affects their everyday living. This hidden public health threat often goes untreated and we think it is vital that at this time of budget cuts that everyone is alert to the two-way links between poor health and loneliness - and are able to make connections in diagnosis and treatment.

The Forum has already brought together groups of older people who live on their own to enjoy a social committee organised river trip; a coach trip to Leeds Castle and on another occasion to enjoy an afternoon tea and entertainment organised by Olivia Goodfellow. And a further event will be held this year with the Waitrose grant donated by their Princes Gardens customers. In addition, the Forum organises many trips, lunches, dinners, visits during the year all designed to bring people together in a convivial way and so break any feeling of loneliness.

Enfield Good Neighbour Groups

The Forum was also instrumental in bringing together the Enfield Good Neighbour Groups - some of them linked to local churches - with the aim of making their work better known both in securing more volunteer helpers and in contacting more people who may need practical help, such as shopping, transport, befriending and visiting, prescription collection and small odd jobs for the elderly and housebound.

Anne Barker, from the Winchmore Hill Community Care group, says: *"You may have read about our groups in the January/February newsletter and we do hope that anyone interested in*

joining as a volunteer will make contact with their local group. We are always in need of regular or occasional volunteers and especially drivers. If you can offer an hour or two weekly or fortnightly to visit someone for a chat and a cup of tea or coffee, that would be much appreciated or if your other commitments allow, perhaps you might consider putting yourself down as an occasional driver or visitor.

"We know that our clients very much enjoy meeting new people, talking about their lives in what can be for many a very lonely time. Many clients and volunteers have become firm friends over the years. In the spirit of the European Year of Volunteering 2011 and the Campaign to End Loneliness which the Forum is supporting, please get in touch with a good neighbour group if you feel you could help. Please note that references and some checks may be required".

There are currently six Good Neighbour Groups in Enfield and they each cover a certain area within the borough. Please contact your local group if you or a friend/neighbour needs help. New volunteers - especially drivers - always welcome.

Eastern Enfield Good Neighbours
(EN3 area)
0208 805 3800
Mon-Fri 10am-12noon

Meet A Need with Christian Care
(Enfield Town, Bush Hill Park & Forty Hill)
0208 363 9929
Mon-Fri 10am-4pm

Palmers Green Good Neighbours
(N13 area)
0208 882 4937
Mon-Fri 10am-12noon

Edmonton Green Good Neighbours
(for N9 and N18)
0208 503 0569
Mon-Fri 9.30am-2pm

Operation FISH
(Southgate, Oakwood, Cockfosters, Hadley Wood)
0208 882 1831
Mon-Fri (office hours vary)
24hr answerphone

Winchmore Hill Community Care
(N21 area)
0208 882 7824
Mon-Fri 10am-12noon

(All groups have an answerphone service)

Random round-up

Help available

Aid for the Aged in Distress (AFTAID) welcomes applications from individuals, or their family and neighbours, of state pensionable age that are UK citizens and resident, with a low income and minimal savings.

AFTAID aims to help older persons who are financially stretched beyond their means to the point of genuine distress. AFTAID can provide grants for many varied items such as mobility scooters, walk-in showers, radiators, cleaning central heating boiler etc. AFTAID do not make grants for ongoing or retrospective payments, nor can they consider repayment of debt. Referrals can also be accepted on behalf of members of the caring professions and voluntary organisations Applications can be made at any time to: <http://www.aftaid.org.uk/grantapp.html>

Cable's cracker

What is the difference between a cat being found dead on a motorway and a banker being found dead on a motorway? Answer: There's more skid marks around the cat - **Vince Cable, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills.**

Mobiles cut-off.....

Did you know that mobile phone providers can disconnect you without warning if the phone is not used for 90 days? This happened to one man whom the press reported had given his father a mobile for use in emergencies, loaded with £124 credit. Carphone Warehouse did refund the money but only as a "gesture of goodwill". This seems to be general practice among mobile phone companies, with refunds made on a case by case basis and only as goodwill gestures.

..... and 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.

Enfield Croquet Club

Free croquet coaching course starting
Details from Brian Dawes 8366 6005 or see
www.enfieldcroquet.org

Tea Dances at Ruth Winston Centre

Tuesdays 1-3pm £2 per week, 1st two week FREE!
190 Green Lanes, N13 5UE Tel: 8886 5346



News from the Met.....

Shut that UPVC door - and windows

Doors and windows are the primary route of entry and exit for most burglars, so it's vital you secure them effectively. It is important to remember these tips when buying, installing and using uPVC doors and windows:

If your house is fitted with UPVC doors make sure you always lock the door with a key. Simply closing the door and pushing the handle up will not prevent someone entering. Ensure that you engage the multi-locking mechanism and that the door is securely locked.

Patio doors should have a minimum of three locking points, with an anti-lift device to prevent them from being lifted from their runners. Always remember to lock your patio doors with a key, and remove the key from the lock.

If you have any information on any crime, and you would prefer not to speak to police you can call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111, or visit: www.crimestoppers-uk.org. Crimestoppers is an independent charity.

For more crime prevention advice call Enfield Police on 020 8345-1102 or visit www.met.police.uk/enfield

The Metropolitan Police Service is here for London, working with you to make London a safer city. In an emergency dial 999. For all other enquiries call our non-emergency number 0300 123 1212.

The Metropolitan Police Service is here for London - on the streets and in your community, working with you to make our city safer.

Scam alert: Over 3 million victims a year

If we all recognised that **SCAM** stands for **S**cheming-**C**rafty-**A**ggressive-**M**alicious we would all always be on the alert against the scammers who take an astounding £3.5 billion from more than 3 million victims every year.

The scams range from fake lottery prize draw wins, miracle health cures, investment offers of high interest bonds or in firms that don't even exist. Not surprisingly, although any adult of any age can fall for a scam, the elderly and vulnerable living alone are the main targets and victims.

The Forum is getting copies of a new Scambusters booklet produced by the Office of Fair Trading which is available to members - and our affiliates - at Forum meetings, or you can pick up a copy from the office - but please call first to ensure we still have them. The booklet provides valuable advice about how we can protect ourselves from scams or if you think you've been caught then phone 08454 04 05 06.

Although we never cease to warn in the Newsletter against people seeking to con you out of your money, we still hear of people falling for get-rich-quick schemes. We warn against talking to people you don't know on the phone, answering an unsolicited email or thinking it's your lucky day when a letter arrives saying you've won a pile.

Here is one example - part of an email received out-of-the-blue by a Forum member:

"I am from Portugal my name is Sr. Augusto Atilio I have been diagnosed with cancer. It has defiled all forms of medical treatment, and right now I have only about a few months to live, according to medical experts.

Though I am very rich, I was never generous, I was always hostile to people and only focused on my business as that was the only thing I cared for. But now I regret all this as I now know that there is more to life than just wanting to have or make all the money in the world.

I would want to have a Personal and Trustworthy Relationship with you, as I intend and willing to empower the change of ownership for the transfer of my Deposits to your personal possession for further Investment and Charity Disbursement to the Less Privilege

and Homeless write me via my mail: augto1959@gmail.com Thank you for your due consideration. God be with you. You can reach me through my private email address at augto1959@gmail.com

Sr. Augusto Atilio."

You are probably dismissive that anyone could fall for such clap-trap, but this is how the unscrupulous try to get hold of someone's bank details, having passed them on to Senor Atilio in the belief that he was going to hand over his wealth to them.

There's an old rule worth remembering - if it looks or sounds too good to be true, it almost certainly isn't

Don't underestimate how cunning the scammers are. When the tax people HMRC sent out a press notice saying millions of people had paid too much tax, the **Scammers** immediately began circulating phoney emails telling people they were in line for a pay-out and wanted to confirm the bank details. **But remember HMRC never, ever send emails.**

One of the cons that costs people the most is holiday clubs or time share investments, and a recent survey found that older people are most likely to be victims of this type of fraud - with 17% of time share scam victims aged between 70 and 79 years old.

Interestingly, once people have been scammed they are unlikely to tell anyone about it. Only 8% of victims went to the police and only 9% went to organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau. Surprisingly, 72% didn't even share their story with friends or family.

The most common type of deception which people fell for is online fraud, - like the above email - with 34% of scams being perpetrated through the internet. The second most common scams were telephone calls usually offering failsafe investments or informing the victim they have won money or holidays.

Our final word of advice is to be cagey when you get unsolicited offers. Take your time, don't be intimidated, resist high pressure callers, be suspicious, consult a friend or a relative before parting with your hard-earned money. And never, ever, give your bank details, pin numbers or passwords to someone you don't know and trust.

**AGM Notice: The Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 31 May 2011
at the Civic Centre, Silver Street, 10am**

Members interested in serving on the executive committee should contact Polly Lawman at the Forum office 020 8360 8743

Guest Speaker: Enfield born, Professor Philip Tew, Professor in English, Brunel University

Twinning project progress **Big brother bashes the big society**

Over 50s representatives from the towns with which Enfield is twinned, Courbevoie (France), Gladbeck (Germany) and Halandri (Greece) have met in Courbevoie for stage two of the project, which will culminate with the presentation of our special report to the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

Having already created a profile describing the opportunities and difficulties for Over 50s in each country, we now want to share views and experiences, with the aim of building an over 50s network linking our towns, and consider ways in which we might use our influence to improve the lives of older people across Europe.



Delegates visiting the Courbevoie Park & Vinyard

So what have we achieved so far?

We are certain that we and the other delegations have reached an understanding of the lives of Over 50s in the various twinned towns and we genuinely believe that we can learn from one another to develop ideas regarding the improvements which need to be made. It is also our belief that we have become closer to the French, German and Greek delegates.

As the Enfield group are leading this project we will be doing more research regarding comparison of income, benefits and pensions across the four towns in collaboration with the other towns. It has been agreed that we will propose the following areas for urgent consideration at Strasbourg: dementia, stroke after care, prevention of ill health and accidents and increasing the influence of seniors

We are also discussing the possibility of recommending that free medical prescriptions and free public transport are available for those over retirement age right across Europe. We have now met together with all the delegations who have come to discuss our shared aims and objectives in improving the services and opportunities which we would wish to propose at local and national level, but particularly to the European Parliament in Strasbourg in 2011.

We are very fortunate that within the Enfield group there are fluent speakers of French, German and Greek, together with a few of us who try hard to recall languages learned in school! Despite the linguistic challenges we have been able to communicate amicably on a personal level and found areas of common interest which is a good foundation for the project.

Christine Whetstone

Fuller information about the project can be seen on www.eur50plus.org

Forum members met with council leader, Doug Taylor, in January to discuss the options facing LBE following the coalition government-imposed cuts to local authority services. It will mean that a £35million shortfall in funding has to be found in the 2011/12 financial year alone.

The administration, we were told, is working to reduce the impact of the reduced funding; but the scale of the cuts is going to affect us all and, in particular, the poorer in our society. The council has lost some £16.7 million in core funding from the government, causing a £7.3 million cut in children's services and about £5 million from adult social services.

The Local Area Agreement funding under which Enfield was rewarded for improving a range of better health objectives was cancelled and some £3 million of reward grant due to Enfield and earmarked for local projects was slashed.

Grants have been withdrawn from regeneration projects and children's services, as well as money for the Future Jobs Fund. The Jobsnet job brokerage scheme - seeking to find work for local jobless - is struggling to keep going.

Despite all the talk about the "**big society**" another early casualty is to be Enfield's voluntary sector. We have now learned of the impending demise of the Enfield Community Empowerment Network (ECEN) with the consequent loss of jobs.

ECEN has been the major route through which the voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations and their service users are able to influence decision-making in Enfield. The Forum has long been an ardent member of ECEN and a keen supporter of the Enfield Strategic Partnership which itself has an uncertain future with more jobs about to go.

The importance of joint working between the VCS, the council and other statutory partners cannot be underestimated, particularly during such difficult times when we hear that VCS organisations are expected to play such a pivotal role in tackling issues relating to significant areas of deprivation in the borough.

This "**slash and burn**" coalition government does not seem to understand that tackling high unemployment, child poverty, health inequalities between people living in the east and west of the borough, poor housing, an ageing population and a general reduction in services requires leadership, an organisation and a structure to initiate and monitor developments and policies.

It cannot all be left to volunteers who have always had a much appreciated role in improving community life.

For well over a decade now the Forum has given its critical support to the council, police, health services, leisure providers and others in the borough. We have been readily available as a consultative arm - and in turn our ability to influence policy and decision-making has been immeasurably enhanced.

I fear that without an effective coordinating body for the voluntary and community sector, the partnership working we have experienced will be undermined, and this will be detrimental to the needs of the local population.

Whither or wither the Big Society?

Tony Watts

Forum secretary

& Co-chair Enfield Strategic Partnership Older People's Board

**This Newsletter is for general information only.
You are recommended to seek competent professional advice before doing anything based on the contents of the Newsletter.**