

Your Voice

The newsletter of the
Newcastle-under-Lyme 50+ Forum

'Giving YOU a VOICE'

50 + Forum Contacts

Telephone:
01782 628855

Email:
jm@mreynolds73
.freeserve.co.uk

Website:
www.nul50plus
forum.org.uk

Chairman:
Mike Reynolds
E: jm@mreynolds73
.freeserve.co.uk

Vice Chairman:
Position vacant

Secretary:
Margaret Coley
E: margaretcoley
@yahoo.co.uk

Treasurer:
Eric Pemberton
E: Eric@ericpemberton
.wanadoo.co.uk

Membership of the Newcastle-under-Lyme 50 + Forum

Membership is open to all residents of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough who are in the 50+ age group.

Members will receive future copies of this Newsletter posted to their home address and will have the right to vote at forums and the Annual General Meeting.

To take up membership we ask only that you agree to having your contact details (name, address, telephone number and email address (if available) recorded on our Database.

This Database is not shared with any other organisations and your contact details will NEVER be divulged without your permission.

To take up membership please email any of the people named (*in the contacts box to the left*), ring on the number shown, or write to

**NUL 50+ Forum, c/o 10 The Mews,
Moreton Parade, May Bank,
Newcastle-under-Lyme ST 5 0TR**

Your Voice

have
your
say!

The newsletter of the
Newcastle-under-Lyme 50+ Forum

ISSUE 1: FEBRUARY 2008



Welcome to our first issue!

Read on to find out more about us and what we are doing to help the over 50's in the Newcastle-under-Lyme area

inside ...

- ◆ 2008 Forum Programme
- ◆ Care in the Community - Where now?
- ◆ Council Tax - is it fair?
- ◆ Independent Living - New project
- ◆ Trading Standards

Welcome to this first issue of **'Your Voice'**.

It is intended to be your voice and we hope that you will be encouraged to let us have your views. The editorial team are anxious to hear how you find this magazine... *is it interesting?... what else should it try to include in the next issue?*

There are many concerns facing all of us; those in the 50-65 age group having differing concerns to those in the 65 plus age group.

Our principal aim is to help people speak up for themselves and influence decision-makers on matters which impact on their everyday lives.

- ◆ wherever practical the 50+ Forum is run by older people for older people - all members are volunteers.
- ◆ It is democratic and inclusive.
- ◆ It is an independent organisation which gives a collective voice to older people.
- ◆ It is non-party political.
- ◆ It decides its own agenda, sharing information and raising issues of concern.

Our contact details are:

Tel: 01782 628855

or you can email to:

jm@mreynolds73.

freeserve.co.uk

about us ...

The forum was launched in February 2006 following a period of planning in which Newcastle Community and Voluntary Support provided advice and some administrative help.

Regular forums have been held in venues around the Borough, we have also hosted meetings with Paul Farrelly MP and Charlotte Atkins MP. We are hoping to welcome Bill Cash MP in September this year.

We correspond regularly with the MPs representing residents in the Borough and are pleased to advise that they respond to our queries. We have gained representation on committees belonging to various statutory agencies.

You write!



In our next issue (hopefully out in June 2008) we want to include your thoughts.

Please write to us at

**10 The Mews,
Moreton Parade,
May Bank,
Newcastle-under-Lyme,
ST5 0TR**

Please appreciate that space is limited. Be brief. Letters may be edited and reduced in size. The Editor's decision is final.

Full address and contact details must be included, not necessarily for publication but for verification.

We look forward to receiving your letters.

Annual General Meeting

Our second AGM took place on Saturday 26th January 2008.

Those elected to office are listed on the back cover; they will be joined on the Management Committee by the following who were elected at the AGM: Ann Beirne, Sue Dean, Peter Cotton, Brian Goodfellow and Neville Mitchison.

Barbara Stoddart (North Staffs Pensioners Convention) will be nominated for co-option to the Management Committee at its first meeting (1st February 2008).

Newcastle Borough Councillors Sylvia Butler and John Williams attended and were able to address some concerns discussed at the meeting.

The audited Annual Accounts were presented to the meeting by our Treasurer, Eric Pemberton. Eric confirmed that our funds were adequate at present but to allow the Forum to expand it would be necessary to seek additional funding.

An application was currently being considered and we should hear the result by early April. Following the business of the AGM we heard from Damian Flynn, Beat the Cold campaign. Damian gave us an entertaining and informative talk and distributed welcome energy saving light bulbs and room temperature checking cards.

Contact Beat the Cold on Freephone 0800 389 2258.

the facts ...

Council Tax is based on the value of your property - it bears no relationship to your income from which you have to pay the tax.

Council Tax has more than **DOUBLED** since 1995. Over the same period basic State pension has risen by 38%, average earnings have risen by 50%.

Council Tax is a regressive tax - the less income you have, the higher the percentage of your income you have to pay in Council Tax.

Council Tax is now far higher than Income Tax for many people.

Council Tax is taking a higher percentage of many people's income every year - because Council Tax rises have outstripped any increase in the income of most pensioners and low paid workers.

Council Tax is a stealth tax - it has been manipulated by Government.

Council Tax

The following is taken from the web site of the IsItFair website and reprinted with their permission. The Management Committee of the NUL 50+ Forum acknowledges the work done by the IsItFair Campaign. If YOU feel strongly about this grossly unfair system of taxation you should join the **IsItFair™ Campaign** - it will cost you nothing, it may save you a lot!

Should you wish to contact IsItFair you can visit their website www.isitfair.co.uk The site contains a wealth of detail on the campaign and suggested alternatives to Council Tax to fund local services.

IsItFair hold regular meetings with ministers, and shadow ministers of all main political parties to achieve its aim of having the Council Tax system reformed.

The Taxpayers' Alliance

The NUL50+ Forum receives updates from both the IsItFair campaign and The Taxpayers' Alliance.

Although working hard to ensure a fairer taxation to replace Council Tax the TPA is concerned with all taxes. It "Campaigns for lower taxes and better government".

Their website www.taxpayersalliance.com will open up a wide variety of campaigns, blogs, updates and reports.

The TPA will be speaking at our Forum in May; this will be a joint meeting with Clough Hall Residents Association at Clough Hall School.

Help The Aged

Help the Aged have provided us with a grant to produce the first issues of this Newsletter.

We have received encouragement and practical financial support from them since our launch. The Help the Aged Policy Department works to influence Government policy both locally and nationally. A visit to their website will show the wide range of activities they are involved in and give details of help and advice available.

The following message has recently been received from Help the Aged through their 'SPEAKING UP FOR OUR AGE' campaign

SELF FUNDING A CARE HOME PLACE COULD MEAN SELLING A FAMILY HOME TO SUBSIDISE OTHER RESIDENTS OF THAT HOME!

Recent research has shown that nearly one in five people have to sell their family home to fund a place in a care home. The study also shows that, until crisis of need arises, people have little awareness of care home charges being far in excess of £30,000 a year.

Moreover, the recent Commission for Social Care and Inspection (CSCI) report 'A Fair Contract With Older People' found that pensioners forced to sell their homes to pay for care are commonly charged more than fellow residents who are paid for by the local authority. Because councils are able to drive down 'bulk' care home fees, private residents are, in reality, getting the raw deal of subsidising the costs of others!

Up to 70,000 homes are needlessly sold to pay for care each year in the UK - when alternative options are most certainly available. Clearly, it pays to be fully informed of possibilities, before the crisis of care home need arises. Care Directions, in association with care funding specialist, NHFA provides comprehensive guidance.

Read it now, by going to the website at www.caredirections.co.uk or telephone 020 8789 7555.

HELPTHEAGED WE WILL

contact details

Telephone: **020 7278 1116**
E: info@helptheaged.org.uk

Visit their website at:
www.helptheaged.org.uk

North Staffs Primary Care Trust

North Staffordshire PCT is the local NHS organisation that plans and commissions all health services for Newcastle Borough and Staffs Moorlands.

It employs over 1,100 staff and directly provides a range of community nursing and therapy services - district nursing, health visiting, school nursing, speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and intermediate care. It is also responsible for all GP practices, NHS dentists, community pharmacists and optometrists in the area. The PCT also manages the community hospitals and health centres across the PCT area.

It continues to develop the range of community based services to provide care and treatment closer to home and has three main strategic objectives:

- ◆ To maintain health, improve health and reduce inequalities,
- ◆ To maintain and improve services,
- ◆ To work closely with social care and those organisations who support the community.

The NUL 50+ Forum has a good working relationship with the NS Primary Care Trust. The Management Committee meet with representatives from the NSPCT on a quarterly basis. These meetings see concerns expressed by membership being discussed.

We have entered into correspondence with our three MPs regarding the need for planned medical checks for the over 75s. Our concerns have been passed on to the Department of Health and we have

(continued on next page)

6

our meetings so far have covered a wide range of subjects & concerns including ...

The situation surrounding the length of delay in getting hearing assessments.

[Macular Degeneration.](#)

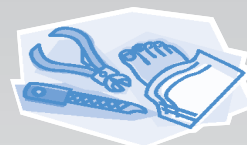
Dental Care under the NHS in Newcastle.

[The general policy of North Staffs PCT on the provision of drugs by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence \(NICE\).](#)

The contract between the NSPCT and GP's. The range of services that North Staffs PCT has responsibility for providing.

How are your feet?

Fine we trust - and receiving all the treatment necessary to keep them in good trim



Chiropody

We are conducting a survey to try and establish just how good, or below standard chiropody services are in Newcastle Borough. If this Newsletter has been posted to you a survey form is included. If you have picked the Newsletter up elsewhere you can obtain a form by contacting us on

Call **01782 628855** or email to **jm@mreynolds73.freeseve.co.uk**

Taking part in the survey will help us make representations to ensure that adequate chiropody services are in place.

North Staffs Primary Care Trust (continued from page 6)

received responses from them - responses that do not satisfy us that there is any move towards ensuring such checks take place; to us they are seen as a vital procedure in the moves towards supporting older people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible.

Currently we understand that the over 75s have the right to request a medical check from their GP. We consider that this is the wrong way round and that GPs should have plans in place to ensure that these older people receive regular medical checks in their own homes if necessary.

We prepare questions prior to our meetings and send these to the North Staffs PCT to allow time for responses to be prepared. Our discussions are open and frank.

Some deadlines for introduction of services or clearance of waiting lists have not been kept but at subsequent meetings explanations of the causes have been forthcoming. Although we are not in a position to take up individual cases we feel sure that readers may have concerns or may wish to comment on the many instances of good service that occur.

Further details and a range of local health information can be found on the North Staffordshire PCT website - www.northstaffordshire-pct.nhs.uk

7

Age Concern North Staffordshire

Age Concern North Staffordshire is a local charity providing services for people aged 50+.

Our purpose is "to promote the well-being of all older people and to help make life a fulfilling and enjoyable experience".



The services they currently provide for older people in Newcastle are:-

- ◆ **Ageing Well** - the Ageing Well team provide a number of activities for people in Newcastle including holidays, day trips, one-to-one computer session and healthy walks. We are also running a special Slipper Exchange campaign for Aspire Housing residents on Carecall in the Chesterton area. This will enable you to exchange your old pair of slippers for a free new pair of safe slippers. For further information on any of the above services, please ring the **Ageing Well Team** on **200729**.
- ◆ **Information & Advice** - they run a drop-in Information and Advice service at the Age Concern Office in Merrial Street, Newcastle (opposite the Police Station). If you need information or advice about any issue at all, do drop in for a chat with one of our Advisors (Monday - Friday 9.30am-1.30pm). Sessions are held in Kidsgrove, Madeley, Wolstanton and Silverdale to enable people in those areas to access our service. For further information please ring our **Age Concern office** on **238222**.
- ◆ **Social Rehabilitation** - they have two Social Rehabilitation Co-ordinators working in Newcastle. One works with the Social Services Re-enablement Team based at The Holborn and the other works with the NHS Intermediate Care Team based at Bradwell Hospital. If you are referred to either of these teams you will probably meet one of the Age Concern Staff, Debra and David.
- ◆ **Accident & Emergency Discharge** - they provide a support service for older people discharged home from the Accident and Emergency Department. Usually referrals are made to us by the Accident and Emergency Medical and Nursing Staff, but if you have recently been discharged from the Accident and Emergency Department and feel you would benefit from this service please contact them on **286209**.

Trading Standards

We are fortunate in Staffordshire to have a very active and efficient Trading Standards working hard to safeguard us.

Useful contact numbers:

Consumer Direct
Tel: **08454 04 05 06**

Community Safety Team
Tel: **01785 277836**

Fraud & Special Investigation Emergency
Tel: **07773 792 252**

Trading Standards Confidential
Tel: **01785 33 03 56**

Who will do that job?

Many consumers find it difficult to find a trader they can rely upon when they need building or repair work carried out upon their homes.

The Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Trader Register has been set up for the benefit of both local consumers and businesses across the county. It aims to reassure consumers, providing advice and information on employing a trader and working together to get things right first time.

Businesses registered with the scheme have all demonstrated their commitment to fair and honest trading practices and delivering good customer service. The Register covers all aspects of home improvement and repair work, including building, carpentry, external property repairs, decorating and home security. In choosing a trader from the Register, and following our simple advice to getting it right first time, Staffordshire consumers can make an important step to find a reliable trader to work upon their home or garden.

To contact the register please call **01785 600610** between 10am and 4pm or visit www.traderregister.org.uk

Watchdogs

Staffordshire County Council Trading Standards "Watchdog Scheme" is the first of its kind in the country, where individual members of the public, or community groups, can act as the eyes and ears of Trading Standards in their local area.

Next local meetings: Chesterton Salvation Army (10am) on Tuesday 8th April and Tuesday 10th June. For more information on this contact: **Cath Wohlers** (Community Development Officer) on **01785 277835**.

Care in the Community

During 2007 Staffordshire County Council decided to close a number of residential care homes and reorganise day care centres.

The NUL 50+ Forum devoted meetings to debate the issues raised and took part in consultation exercises. Our colleagues at the North Staffs Pensioners Convention also responded to consultation documents and organised a strong campaign against closures.

Our meetings attracted strong panels with representatives from both the County Council and Statutory Agencies.

We shall remain vigilant and press for full and meaningful consultation prior to the County Council introducing planned changes.

HM Government have issued a document **"Putting People First"**, a shared vision of commitment to the transformation of Adult Social Care.

The document is too large for us to reprint in full but the following quotes from it will, we trust allow you to begin to see how central government intends the services to be altered and run.

"A personalised Adult Social Care System". The key elements will be ...

1. Local authority leadership accompanied by authentic partnership working with the local NHS, other statutory agencies, third and private sector providers, users and carers and the wider local community to create a new, high quality care system which is fair, accessible and responsive to the individual needs of those who use services and their carers.
2. Agreed and shared outcomes which should ensure people, irrespective of illness or disability, are supported to:
 - ◆ **Live independently.**
 - ◆ **Stay healthy and recover quickly from illness.**
 - ◆ **Exercise maximum control over their own life and where appropriate the lives of their family members.**
 - ◆ **Sustain a family unit which avoids children being required to**

We are pleased to say that Staffordshire County Council has made a good start on the wish expressed by central government by setting up discussions on an **"Adult Care Panel"**. Our chairman, *Mike Reynolds*, was invited to attend an initial meeting to discuss the setting up of the panel.

The following is Mike's report on that meeting.

Representatives from around the county discussed the setting up of a panel with Cllr Susan Woodward (Cabinet Member, Healthier Communities & Older People), Stephen Butterworth (Deputy Corporate Director, Community Services) and Nicola Sawyer (County Manager Access & Information).

Nicola will lead the programme to introduce "adult care panels" into the 8 regions of the county; these district panels to work closely with the District Directors (Social Services) to ensure that concerns of service users, carers and the general public are brought to his attention. A full, frank discussion took place and I left satisfied that this is a genuine move on the part of the County Council to ensure that those representing older people, people with chronic conditions, disabled people and people with mental health problems are included in the planning stages of services. Those

services designed to see that people have the best possible quality of life and the equality of independent living that is fundamental to a socially just society. We were assured that the County Council were not looking for "token" members of either a central or district panels who would rubber stamp Cabinet decisions. I would in turn assure you that neither I nor those I met on the day will be backward in ensuring that the concerns of the electorate are voiced.

It was an excellent start to what will be a long journey. Those attending will meet again in 3 months time when it is hoped significant progress will have been made to have district panels up and running.

take on inappropriate caring roles.

- ◆ **Participate as active and equal citizens, both economically and socially.**
- ◆ **Have the best possible quality of life, irrespective of illness or disability.**
- ◆ **Retain maximum dignity and respect.**

Recycling



Makes sense and can save us all money!!!

New government legislation will apply severe fines to all councils failing to meet recycling targets.

If you do not have a blue box and bag or need a replacement you can order one by contacting

Waste Management
Tel: 01782 742592

Blue Box Kerbside Recycling

Use your bag and box!

This is the easiest way to get your waste recycled. Collections are made from the kerbside outside your house each fortnight using blue boxes and bags.

Collections start at 8am. Calendars are delivered to each house so it's easy to know when to take part.

All paper (except envelopes) should be put in the blue bag. Paper such as junk mail, newspaper, magazines and directories can be recycled using this bag.

All glass bottles and jars should be put into the blue box.

All cans, tins, clean cooking foil and all empty aerosols should be placed into the blue box.

Any unwanted clothes (washed please), paired shoes, towels, blankets, belts and handbags should be put into the red and white sack.

If you don't have the small red and white package containing a textile recycling bag, don't worry. You can use a bin bag or carrier bag instead. Put it out with your other recycling, and it will be replaced with a textile bag when the collection is made.

An Independent Life at Mill Rise

Mill Rise is an exciting and innovative extra care development that will be coming to Newcastle in the near future.

A partnership between Aspire Housing, North Staffordshire Primary Care Trust, Newcastle Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council, Mill Rise is also receiving support from the Housing Corporation and Renew to provide 60 retirement apartments for older people with care and support needs to rent or buy from May 2009.

Each apartment will provide independence, comfort and peace of mind in a safe and secure environment that offers many additional facilities including a residents' lounge, hobbies room, dining area, laundry, buggy storage, assisted bathing and door entry system with CCTV. Fully wheelchair accessible, with raised height electrical sockets and a 24-hour CareCall system that can also be used with telecare products all fitted as standard, these apartments have been designed to enable people to remain living independently within a community of like-minded others.

Staff will be available 24 hours a day to provide care and support linked to individuals' needs, promote health and well being by linking in with other organisations and support tenants with arranging social and leisure events that will also be available to the wider community. There will also be a hot meals service to give people the option of eating with friends as an alternative to cooking at home.

Architect's impression 1



Shown from the Courtyard

Architect's impression 2



Showing the Medical Centre on the right.

If you would like to find out more about the scheme please contact **Suzie King** at **Aspire Housing** on **01782 854904**.

If you would like to register your interest in or find out more about the shared ownership apartments please contact **Parwin Khaliq** on **01782 854738**.

Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service

Did you know

They provide a FREE safety check of your home. The visit will only take around 20 minutes of your time and could save your life!

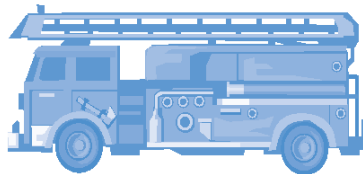
During that visit you will receive advice on smoke alarms and the best places for them to be located as well as planning of escape routes and all other matters concerning fire risk and safety within the home.

Smoke alarms are provided free of charge and consideration can be given to providing such things as deep fat fryers (in exchange for old fashioned chip pans), fire guards, electrical extension leads and a wide range of other fire protection measures.

Each year Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service works in partnership with Trading Standards to offer a free electric blanket check. Failing blankets are replaced free of charge. This usually takes place in September. However, if during the visit to your home we find your blanket to be potentially unsafe we will replace it free of charge.

Who to contact

For advice and to arrange a home visit - ring Neil Broad at Newcastle Fire Station on 01785 898547 or you can email him on n.broad@staffordshirefire.gov.uk



THANK YOU!

Newcastle-under-Lyme 50+ Forum would like to take this opportunity to thank

Help the Aged

Staffs County Council

Aspire Housing

Newcastle Borough Council

The Scarman Trust

and

Newcastle Community & Voluntary Support

for supporting us either by way of grant aid or practical assistance in kind since our launch.

Forum Programme for 2008



We endeavour to theme each forum on a current issue and in consequence last minute decisions are taken.

To obtain up to date information on the programme visit our website or get in touch.

Telephone:
01782 628855

Email to:
jm@mreynolds73.freerve.co.uk

Website:
www.nul50plusforum.org.uk

Thursday 13th March 2008

Clayton Community Centre, Northwood Lane, Clayton. 10am - noon
NHS Continuing Care Team.
Question & Answer Session.

Thursday 24th April

Oddfellows Hall, Ashley
10am - 12 noon
NHS Continuing Care Team.
Question & Answer Session.

Thursday 22nd May

JOINT FORUM
with Clough Hall Residents Association
Clough Hall School, 7pm - 9pm
Council Tax. The Taxpayers' Alliance.

Thursday 17th July

St. Giles' Church Hall, Newcastle
10am - noon.

Thursday 25th September

Madeley meeting with Bill Cash MP
7pm - 9pm.

Monday 17th November

Quaker Meeting House, Newcastle
10am - noon

and finally - early in 2009

Saturday 31st January 2009

Annual General Meeting
St. George's Church Hall, Newcastle
10.30am - 12.30pm