

Your Voice

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

'Giving YOU a VOICE'

50 + Forum Contacts

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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 (*see 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 ST5 0TR**

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Your Voice

have
your
say!

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

ISSUE 5: MARCH 2009



See back cover for
details of how to
receive copies
of all future
Newsletters and
details of how to
take up membership.



inside ...

- ◆ Institutional Ageism in the NHS
- ◆ Meeting with Staffordshire Fire and Rescue
- ◆ Inadequacy of the State Pension
- ◆ North Staffs University Hospital - update on the Foundation status application

and much more!

Welcome to our March 2009 newsletter

A few words from our Chairman ...

The AGM was a very successful event and the idea of holding a forum directly afterwards and then enjoying some time together over a buffet lunch was well received.

Anthea Bourne has joined the Management Committee as Vice Chairman, Margaret Coley was re-elected as Secretary and Eric Pemberton as Treasurer. Brian Goodfellow, Peter Cotton, Sue Dean, Neville Mitchison were re-elected to the committee and are joined by Barbara Stoddart who was co-opted at the first committee meeting.

I make no apology for reproducing parts of two important press releases from Help the Aged later in this issue. Lots of supposedly understanding words are spoken by central government on their determination to ensure that older people get a fair deal. I think we can be excused from wondering why despite all these words there is a seeming lack of will to actually tackle the question of paying a decent level of Old Age Pension. There is much concern on the possible ageist attitude that seems to exist within the NHS

and I draw your attention to the Help the Aged press release. A Government Green Paper is due out in April reviewing the whole question of social care. Our friends Help the Aged are looking for support from all of us to ensure that the Government is left in no doubt as to the seriousness of the situation. Chronic under funding and unnecessary red tape has left the system in crisis. We know that many thousands of people are simply not getting the care and support they need to live their lives with dignity and independence. Many others are caring for family members and friends without pay, support or recognition. If you have experience of social care issues, either first hand personal experience or as a family member, friend, carer, or professional who would talk about someone else's experience then H the A need your help. They would be interested in

Included with the copies mailed to members is a flyer detailing an event -

“Does Someone Depend On You?”

This is being held at **Bradwell Lodge, Porthill, ST5 8PS** on **Tuesday 7th April** from **10am to 1pm**.

Please try and get along or mention the event to anyone you know who might be interested in attending.

The 50+ Forum will be there to talk to people about our work.

speaking to anyone who feels that the care and support available to them or their friends and family needs to be improved., e.g. care and support that is inadequate for their needs, services that have been cut due to tightening eligibility criteria, prohibitive or unfair charging and using personal or individual budgets.

If you are willing to share your experiences to help support the work of H the A on care, please contact **Jane Keating**, Senior Campaigns Officer, who will be glad to talk to you. She can be contacted on **020 7239 1930**.

Latest cost of living figures mean pensioners falling behind as benefits go unclaimed!

A Press Release from our friends Help the Aged drew attention to the inadequacy of the State Pension.

Responding to Office for National Statistics (ONS) information on pensioner household spending, **David Sinclair**, Head of Policy for Help the Aged says: “Older people are struggling under the weight of increasing costs of living but the basic state pension is now utterly failing to keep pace. The ONS figure, which show 40 per cent of an average weekly expenditure of £218 goes on food, energy bills, housing and council tax in 2007, is a huge chunk of what is a small pie.”

“Council Tax increases are taking an ever-larger toll on pensioners pockets, fuel costs overwhelm the annual Winter Fuel Allowance while even the costs of basics such as food and clothes means many older people are facing tough choices this year.”

“The Government must now accept that the state pension is inadequate and in need of serious rethinking. More must be done to secure higher levels of take-up of key benefits so that pensioner poverty is properly tackled. Paying benefits automatically via a single application would reduce the means-testing which acts as a real barrier for many older people when it comes to getting what they are entitled to. As much as £5 billion worth of benefits is going unclaimed by our pensioner population, which is a damning indictment of a system that is in urgent need of reform.”

We have carried an article on The Pension Service and would remind you that advice on all benefits can be easily obtained by calling them on **0845 6060265**. An appointment can be made for them to visit you in your own home or you can visit one of the regular Advisory Clinics.

Details are available on the same number.

Hello, I am **Peter Cotton**; born in Chesterton I left school at 15. I went into the pits working underground until at age 18 I was faced with the choice of remaining in the pit or being called up for National Service.

People Profile Peter Cotton



Peter is a member of the 50+ Forum Management Committee

I had for some time found the conditions in the pit bad and decided to join the Royal Marines as a regular soldier. Following the first Kuwait crisis I suffered an accident that caused me to lose the sight in my right eye. I was operated on in Singapore; following recovery I was medically discharged. Hazel and I set up home in Knutton where we have remained for close on fifty years. I worked for 'Mr Kipling' for 30 years as a shift engineer at the Trent Vale bakery.

Since my retirement I have been actively engaged in all things concerning Knutton; trying to make sure that the residents of Knutton had their concerns voiced to local and county authorities. I have sat on various committees with the Local Strategic Partnership and Newcastle Communities Forum.

I have been associated with NUL 50+ Forum from the start and am a member of the Management Committee. Recent heart by-pass surgery has restricted my involvement over the last few months but I am delighted to say that I am making steady progress back to the stage when I can join my friends on the Management Committee in working to ensure that your concerns are voiced and addressed.

Peter Cotton

NEWCASTLE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE

Newcastle Friendship Centre is an independent social group open to all over 50s. We have around 40 members and arrange a monthly pub lunch, theatre trips, various outings and weekly ten pin bowling for fun. We meet, usually with a speaker, in Newcastle Library on the first Tuesday of each month at 1.30pm. You are very welcome to join us.

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Specialist Doctors label the NHS institutionally ageist and demand a law to bring it to an end

The following Press Release was issued by Help the Aged in January.

New research shows almost half (47 per cent) of doctors specialising in the care of older people think the NHS is institutionally ageist. The research found an overwhelming three quarters (77 per cent) of British Geriatrics Society (BGS) members would support the introduction of legislation against age discrimination in the NHS.

The Government has announced age discrimination legislation will be part of the forthcoming Equality Bill - but current proposals mean the regulations protecting older people in health and social care may not be approved before the next election.

Help the Aged is calling on the Government to review their timetable as a matter of urgency. If they do not, older people may be left to wait over a year before the regulations the Government promised older people are even drafted.

Kate Jopling, Head of Public Affairs for Help the Aged, says: "The Government has taken a bold step towards protecting older people but they are at risk of stumbling before they complete the first stride. Each day without a new law, older people risk being ignored, misdiagnosed or even denied appropriate treatment. Older people have a right to fair health care, free from ageist prejudice."

"The right time to pass the new age regulations is alongside the new bill, so that older people will be protected as soon as possible. If this opportunity is missed, older people could be left waiting indefinitely for the same protections other groups already enjoy."

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the new research also shows that ...

Over half (**55%**) of the doctors from the BGS said they themselves would be worried about how the NHS will treat them in old age.

Two thirds (**66%**) of doctors specialising in the care and treatment of older patients agreed that in their experience, older people are less likely to have their symptoms fully investigated.

Seven out of ten (**72%**) geriatricians said older people were also less likely to be considered and referred on for essential treatments.

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Kate Jopling, of Help the Aged, concludes: "Older people are not asking for special treatment but simply the chance to get equal treatment. The Government has promised older people fairness in this parliament. Ministers must now deliver."

Alex Mair, Chief Executive of the British Geriatrics Society, says: "What this research makes clear is that the NHS is currently failing older people. We need to ensure that patients of all ages receive the very best care, regardless of their age. The proposed age regulations for health and social care will be integral to changing attitudes and ultimately improving care. The sooner we have these regulations in place the better it will be for older people."

Call Help the Aged customer services on 020 7239 1982 for further information and write to your MP ensuring that he/she fully understands the concerns you have. Ask them what they intend to do about your concerns.

AGE CONCERN NORTH STAFFS Information and Advice Service

Age Concern North Staffs run a drop-in Information and Advice service at their

**Merial Street Office
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Monday to Friday from
9.30am to 1.30pm.**

Sessions also held in Kidsgrove and Silverdale to enable people to access the service.

If you need information or advice about any issue at all, please drop in for a chat or telephone **01782 238222** or **238282**.

March Forum Information

Thursday 19th March
St. Giles' Church Hall
Newcastle.
starting at 10.00am

At our next forum meeting in March we will be discussing **Fall Strategy** and we will also be taking a look at **Dementia**.

Dementia has been much publicised of late and we are hoping to get ourselves better informed with this forum.

You are very welcome to come along and join us at the March forum - details of date and venue are listed to the left.

Contact the Elderly

'Contact the Elderly' is a charity that has been supporting lonely elderly people for over forty years now.

We do this by organising Sunday afternoon tea for small local groups once a month, in a family home, and as you can imagine this makes all the difference to lonely older people. Conversation, friendship and laughter, some sandwiches, cake and cups of tea have a fantastic effect on everyone involved.

We have just set up a group in Newcastle-under-Lyme, but it has begun on rather more of a 'wing and a prayer' than I like, as we have lost the Group's Co-ordinator, and now have only one volunteer host!



Mike Reynolds (50+ Forum Chairman) adds:

"This is a great scheme that I understand is working very well in other areas. I do hope that some reading this will be able to volunteer to help gets things organised in Newcastle."

Pamela Walker

Group Co-ordinator required!

Can you help us?

if you can please contact:

Pamela Walker

Tel: 0121 603 1331

or by Freephone to

0800 716 543

E-mail: pamela.walker@contacttheelderly.org.uk

The group needs someone who is prepared to co-ordinate the monthly get-togethers, as well as 6-11 hosts each willing to welcome a group of 8-10 elderly people and 3-5 Volunteer drivers into their home for Sunday afternoon tea once or twice a year. Hosts will need a downstairs loo, not too many steps and a big teapot!

If you know of any local older person who would benefit from these free monthly get-togethers, please let me know.

NHS North Staffordshire

NHS North Staffordshire, the new name for North Staffordshire Primary Care Trust, is responsible for leading the NHS in North Staffordshire. It is responsible for health services for the 210,000 people living in Newcastle and the Staffordshire Moorlands. The organisation, with an annual budget of £300m, is responsible for all GP practices, NHS dentists, community pharmacists and optometrists in the area.

Through its provider arm, North Staffordshire Community Healthcare, a range of community hospitals and health centres, community nursing and therapy services, district nursing, health visiting, school nursing, speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and intermediate care are also provided. For further details see www.northstaffordshire.nhs.uk

Update on new GP-led Medical Centre in Newcastle ...

In our last issue we carried an article on the new GP Led Medical Centre in Newcastle. We are pleased to give an update based on a press release from NHS North Staffs.

Following a competition won by Robert Cooper from May Bank the new centre will be called the **'Midway Medical and Walk In Centre'**. The new GP-led health centre will be based in the ground floor of Morston House, The Midway, Newcastle, next to the Roebuck Shopping Centre. It will be run and managed by GPs and will provide access to a range of services from 8am to 8pm, seven days a week, on all 365 days of the year.

After a rigorous tender process NHSolutions, who run practices in Newcastle under Lyme and Packmoor, have been appointed as the preferred bidder for the centre. They are now working to agree the contract and plan in detail the range of services that will be available. The new centre is currently being equipped by contractors, in time for its opening at the end of March.

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Meetings with NHS North Staffordshire

The NUL 50+ Forum meets with NHS North Staffordshire on a quarterly basis to convey member's concerns and receive responses. The next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday 23rd April**.

Should you have anything you wish to be raised at our next meeting please let us know?

North Staffordshire

Exemption from prescription charges for cancer patients ...

There's one less worry for people who are undergoing treatment for cancer, the effects of cancer, or the effects of cancer treatment.

They can now apply for a 5 year exemption certificate from prescription charges.

Application forms for free supplies are available from GP surgeries and oncology (tumours) clinics and must be counter-signed by the patient's GP or treatment doctor.

Charges will be scrapped from 1st April 2009. All applications must be received by 24th March 2009 to be processed in time for the start date.

(If you are reading this after 24th March please check with your GP surgery for the procedure to take up the free prescription offer).

The new exemption is available to anyone undergoing treatment for cancer or the effects of cancer, including the effects of previous treatment for cancer. It is not intended for patients who have been treated and are now apparently clear of cancer where no further treatment is planned.

A national review is currently underway to look at introducing free prescriptions for people with other long-term conditions.

Staffordshire Social Care Workforce Partnership

There is an ever growing need for well trained staff to care for an ageing population and we are pleased to note that this partnership exists to ensure that those choosing to enter the care profession receive first class training.

They work in partnership with a number of statutory agencies and the voluntary sector to achieve a skilled workforce to meet the needs of people living in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

They offer an ongoing service giving advice, guidance and support to staff working in social care.

Any employer or employee working within social care who would like to find out more should contact

Joanne Adams
by telephone on
01782 442863



Extra Care Housing

To discuss purchase options for one of the 20 x 2 bed apartments, or to make an appointment to view the show apartment * please contact:

Parwin Khaliq

Telephone: **0800 027 9774**

or email her at:
pkhaliq@aspirehousing.co.uk

For more general information about Mill Rise visit the website at:
www.millrisesales.co.uk

* please note that viewings of the show apartment are by appointment only

Mill Rise Update

Diana Wilson recently commenced her new role of Scheme Manager at Mill Rise Village - Newcastle's first extra-care scheme.

Diana will be based at Aspire Housing's head offices on the Brampton until the scheme is ready for people to move in. She is very excited about the challenging role ahead and is eager to get started.



With a wealth of knowledge and expertise behind her, Diana said: "I am thrilled to finally be in post and undergoing a full induction." She continued: "I am really looking forward to meeting members from the Friends of Mill Rise group and working with them to continue their good work."

Diana's experience includes working for several years at the 'Centre for Policy on Ageing' base in London and she was instrumental in publicising key government documents, including the Code of Practice for Residential Care. Diana has lived in Staffordshire for over 10 years and coming from a family of medical professionals, understands all too well the importance of providing care and support to older and vulnerable members of the community.

The Mill Rise Village development is on target to open in the Summer 2009 and the show apartment will be opening shortly.

Get your **FREE** Fire Safety Check

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service provide a FREE safety check of your home.

The visit will only take around 20 minutes of your time and it could save your life!

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

What do you need to do?

Contact: **Neil Broad** at Newcastle Fire Station on **01785 898547** or email to: **n.broad@staffordshirefire.gov.uk**

Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service

Your chairman and Colin Davies met recently with Cllr Phil Maskery, Portfolio Holder for Safer & Stronger Communities, Chris Bromley M.I.Fire.E Area Commander Staffs Fire & Rescue and Kelvin Chell, Fire Safety Officer to discuss concerns over manning levels and the standards of service available to residents in Newcastle.



We spoke of the concerns being expressed on 'Variable Crewing' and received assurances that the updated fleet of appliances available are, and will be adequately manned at all times.

Lengthy discussion took place around the changes in legislation that have led to a greater degree of "self regulation" among owners of public buildings. Cllr Maskery will draw our local MPs attention to some perceived concerns in this area.

The full report can be read on our website **www.nul50plusforum.org.uk**

Those requiring a hard copy please contact the chairman or secretary. Contact details on back cover.

LONELY? ... North Staffs LINKLINE can help

10% (968,780) people aged over 65 in the UK say they are always or often lonely (figure is taken from Help the Aged Report 2008). **North Staffs LINKLINE (Tel: 01782 710436)** are one of the local organisations addressing this situation. Please ring them for details.

University Hospital of North Staffordshire

Outcome of Public Consultation

Our thanks to Andrea Green (Director, Foundation Trust Development) for this update on the move towards Foundation Trust status.



The Trust consulted the public on their five year plans an element of which was a proposal to become a Foundation Hospital in 2009. Foundation status for Hospitals is something the Government introduced in 2003; it is not an option whether to become a foundation hospital, the issue is when and how should a local one be established to ensure robust local accountability.

The Trust received 144 written responses, some of which were from organisations with the job of representing many local people and interest groups. The support for the proposals varied between 88% and 93% support for each of the main questions asked. The Trust also received many qualitative comments on where people felt we should improve what we do and also in aspects where they commended the Trust and supported the work of the staff.

After considering all of the comments received in writing, and those questions received during public sessions such as those with the 50+ Group, Neighbourhood Forums etc. the Trust Board made a decision to change some of the proposals to reflect the feedback from the public.

These changes are:

- ◆ The Board agreed that the Membership Council meetings be held in public, and that the Board meetings continue to be held in public, once Foundation Trust status is achieved. This was responding to the concerns people raised about ongoing accountability.
- ◆ The Board agreed to increase the age of Members from the proposed 11 years to 14, as many people commented on 11 being too young. To increase the age of Governors from the proposed 16 years to 18. The Board is determined however, that the voice of young people must not be lost at the Membership Council.

- ◆ The Board also agreed to reconsider how best to get engagement from the councils in Staffordshire, Newcastle under Lyme and Staffordshire Moorlands as the proposed single appointed Governor from these areas was challenged.

During the consultation period a number of difficulties arose in the A&E service. Although the pressure on emergency services has been seen at hospitals throughout the region, Directors feel that their focus must be on resolving these issues. Therefore, although there is clearly good support for our plans to become a Foundation Trust, the Board decided to delay our next stage application.

The Board is delighted that so many people got involved with the consultation, and plan to continue to build engagement with community groups.

Your Local Involvement Network

Staffordshire LINK

The LINK is a new independent organisation which replaced the Patient and Public Involvement in Health (PPIH) groups in 2008.

Made up of individuals and community groups who want to work together to improve health and social care services, the LINK has the right to comment on, ask questions about or make recommendations about any service that is publicly funded e.g. Primary, Acute and Mental Health Trusts, doctors, dentists, chemists, chiropractors, residential care homes, as well as a range of services commissioned by the local authority or health trust, such as Meals on Wheels.

The job of the LINK is to find out what people like and dislike about local services and to work with the people who plan and run them to help make them better. This may involve suggesting ways that an existing service could be made better or talking directly with the commissioners about unmet needs and encouraging them to set up new services that would improve community health and social care.

Anyone can join the LINK - carers, service users, patient representatives, community leaders, charities, faith groups, residents associations, youth councils, black & minority ethnic organisations, business federations - anyone who wants to make sure that the needs of their community are listened to.

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Staffordshire LINK *(continued)*

You can choose whether to get involved in running a local committee, organise an event or a research project, or simply take part in surveys. You decide how much time you want to commit and the sort of role you want to volunteer for.

Eight local committees have been set up in Staffordshire each of which sends a representative to the LINK County Board.

For details of your nearest group and to obtain further details about how you can get involved in Staffordshire LINK please contact **Sue Baknak**, LINK Co-ordinator on **01785 887990** or email to **sue.baknak@staffordshirelink.staffs.com**

You can also obtain information from the website at **www.staffordshirelink.org.uk** or **www.direct.gov.uk/localinvolvementnetworks**

Elections for the Newcastle District Committee will be held at Bradwell Lodge, Porthill at 6.30pm on Thursday 26th March as part of the AGM.

Please come along to this public meeting and see just how you can begin to influence health and social care services in this area.

Staffordshire LINK can ...

- ◆ ask local people what they think of health and social care and feedback their ideas for improving services
- ◆ look into specific issues of concern to the community
- ◆ seek information about services - and obtain a response within specified time limits
- ◆ make recommendations to the people who plan and run services
- ◆ carry out visits to premises where publicly funded health and social care services are being provided
- ◆ encourage providers to adopt examples of good practice
- ◆ refer issues to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration.

2009 Forum Programme



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

For more details about our forums

please telephone
01782 628855

or visit the website at
www.nul50plusforum.org.uk

Thursday 19th March 2009

Theme: Falls Strategy & A Look at Dementia
at St. Giles' Church Hall, Newcastle
from 10.00am to 12 noon.

Tuesday 19th May

Theme will be around Care in the Community
Joint Forum with Clough Hall Residents Association (to be held in Kidsgrove)
from 7.15pm to 9.15pm

Thursday 16th July

Theme: Facing Unemployment: Opportunities for finding work or retraining for a new career.
at St. George's Church Hall, Newcastle
from 6.30pm to 9.00pm

Thursday 10th September

at Oddfellows Hall, Ashley
from 10.00am to 12 noon

Thursday 19th November

at St. Giles' Church Hall, Newcastle
from 10.00am to 12 noon

IMPORTANT NOTICE

From time to time some articles in this Newsletter will publicise services available. Please note that the Newcastle-under-Lyme 50+ Forum has no responsibility for the standard or cost of such services. Readers wishing to utilise any of these services must ensure its suitability for themselves.



Are you Interested?

A HELPING HAND ?

Opportunities for Volunteers at the University Hospital of North Staffordshire
Volunteering experiences are available in the hospital complex as ward aides, meeters and greeters and in the chaplaincy service.

Please contact **Ray Green** (Volunteer Co-ordinator) on
Tel: **01782 555866** Email: **volunteer.services@uhns.nhs.uk**