

## News from Lewisham Pensioners Forum July/August 2009

### Contacting Us

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436 Lewisham High Street  
London SE13 6LJ  
Phone: 020 8690 7869  
*"a campaigning voice"*

## Dear Forum Member

Lewisham Pensioners Forum continues to campaign on issues of concern to older people both locally and nationally and below is an update on the campaign topics that we have been active on in recent months. I do hope that you enjoy being brought up to date on what we do to profile the interests of older people in Lewisham and hope that you can come along to our next Forum meeting on July 29th, the full details of which are on the back page.

### End Fuel Poverty Campaign

Firstly, an update on the 'End Fuel Poverty' campaign. You will recall in our last newsletter that Forum members were invited to attend a Public Meeting on May 28th to discuss the Fuel Poverty Bill and a BIG Thank You is sent to all of you who made it on the night to make sure that pensioners in Lewisham were represented.

Unfortunately Joan Ruddock did not attend the meeting, so was unable to hear first hand the overwhelming demand of the meeting to support the bill and fulfil Labour's election manifesto pledge to end Fuel Poverty.

The Bill, which was scheduled to return to the House on June 12th, was we understand, objected to by the Minister for Energy and will not now return until 16th October 2009. While it is regrettable that this objection has delayed the process, we should remain positive and note that campaigners for the Bill now have a bit more time to promote the Bill which could result in it becoming law. If made law the Fuel Poverty Bill would end the scandal of cold homes, cut emissions of carbon dioxide as we use less fuel, create tens of thousands of 'green jobs' and reduce the costs picked up by the health service as it treats people affected by living in cold and damp homes. In Lewisham alone, the Fuel Poverty Coalition calculate that nearly 3,000 older people will have to choose between eating and heating and this could result in up to 800 'excess winter deaths'.

We are delighted to report that Mervyn Kohler, Special Advisor to Help the Aged and Age Concern, who spoke at the above public meeting, has accepted our invitation to come along to Pensioners Day on September 16th 2009, to speak to us about addressing the fuel poverty of older people. Given that the Bill will be returning to the House on October 16th, this will be a great opportunity for us to measure the strength of pensioner support for the Bill in Lewisham and convey this to the Minister for Energy Joan Ruddock, who is as you know also our local MP.

## Lobby of Parliament on the Care of Older People

On June 10th five Forum members joined with older people from all over the country to take part in 'Help the Aged's' national campaign to address the failures of the care and support system for older people and to demand that the Government urgently reform a care system which is often complex, unfair and sub standard. Our group met with Jim Dowd MP and, after sharing with him real life examples of inadequate care, we requested that he call upon his Government to produce its Green Paper to bring about change. The Government had committed to publishing a Green Paper which would outline its proposals for reform but the publication date had been slipped from April to June. The fear was that the Government would postpone publication again. At time of writing this newsletter (1.7.09) the Green Paper had not been published in June but a recent statement by Gordon Brown indicated that the Government would be issuing a statement in early July that addresses people having to sell their homes to pay for care. On July 1st 2009 The Daily Telegraph reported:

*"The Department of Health will propose radical reforms in the Green Paper expected on Tuesday...The Green Paper will also suggest new measures to allow the elderly to remain independent and an extension of schemes allowing pensioners and disabled people to choose how their care is*

*provided..."At the moment people have to pay huge amounts of their savings or sell their homes and they get very angry about that. They feel robbed," said the source..."Of all the issues, that's the one we hear the loudest...Consultation will continue until the end of October, giving the care services minister, Phil Hope, little time to draw up legislation before a general election that must be held by June...Campaigners welcomed plans to overhaul the system, but said short-term measures were desperately needed and could be implemented quickly...These could include improving advice about financing care, and encouraging more councils to defer payment, where the cost of a care home is paid from a resident's estate after their death... Source: [http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/health\\_news/5702725/No-need-for-elderly-to-sell-home-to-pay-care-bill.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/health_news/5702725/No-need-for-elderly-to-sell-home-to-pay-care-bill.html)*

*Stephen Burke, the chief executive of the charity Counsel and Care in 'Mature Times, July 2009': is quoted :..."There are growing numbers of older people but fewer people are getting care and support. Older people, their families and carers are struggling to get the quality care and support they urgently need. Many have to sell their homes or use their lifetime savings to pay for the ever increasing costs of a care home place. Now is the time for radical reform...the forthcoming Green Paper on care and support must spark a wide public debate about what we want the future of care funding to look like ."*

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## Adult Learning and Libraries

In a recent report, '*Grey Matter Matters*', Age Concern London, the Greater London Forum for Older People and Help the Aged brought together over 100 people, policy makers and educational providers to discuss learning opportunities and the way forward. Their report makes very interesting reading, so we shall try and get some copies to bring to the next Forum meeting. The main recommendations that came out of this project in March 2009 were, briefly:

- A London wide older people's learning pass should be developed giving access opportunities across the capital.
- All local authorities should have a strategic plan for access to learning and leisure services for older people.
- Learning must be affordable for all with charges set at a low level that are affordable to people on low incomes.

The report reminds us that learning opportunities for older people are likely to be among the issues raised in local elections and a general election next year. It will be up to us to make sure that rigorously test the manifesto commitments of all the candidates and their parties!

At a local level the Forum is fortunate to be able to link up with the very active Grove Park Users Group who work tirelessly to keep affordable adult education on the agenda and we are grateful to them for everything they do behind the scenes to protect affordable provision for older people.

In recent months representatives from the Grove Park Users Group have contributed to the Lewisham Mayor's Commission on Libraries and Learning which will, after a period of consultation and discussion be launched on July 9th 2009 at Grove Park Library. The comments of the Mayor and the Grove Park representatives to the launch are:-

*"The idea was to bring together a group of individuals who were interested in and had some relevant knowledge. The task was to create ideas and look at what might be done in the future. It is not a formal decision making body neither is it a vehicle for consultation. It is simply a way to get that group of interested individuals together so they can get the debate going." (Sir Steve Bullock—Mayor of Lewisham). to be approved)*

*"The Grove Park representatives had difficulties with the approach adopted by the Commission and questioned whether they could put their names to something that was not in the best interests of the users of the service and because of this they went out to inform, network, organise public meeting and maintain contact with the Mayor. The Grove Park representatives remain dissatisfied with the outcome believing the document to be a 'top down' document that meets the remit of policy makers and not individuals who want to access adult learning" (Grove Park Representatives).*

The Forum has yet to see the findings of the Commission document so cannot comment on the content but we will be sending a representative along to the launch on July 9th and will report back.

## Save Our NHS & Keep Our NHS Public

At a recent meeting of Lewisham's Healthier Communities Select Committee, (see Mercury cutting) the PCT presented its findings on the consultation to privately tender health services within the Waldron Centre making it a GP led surgery. While we made every effort to point out that we felt the findings of the consultation process did not reflect the 1000+ who had signed a petition opposing a GP led surgery, the Committee accepted the consultation findings of the PCT that supported a GP led surgery. The campaign continues however, and on Friday July 17th 2009, arrangements have been made for Forum & NHS group members who are Deptford constituents, to lobby Joan Ruddock at the Waldron Centre.

The Save Our NHS sub group of the Forum wrote to the PCT sometime back asking if we could be involved as observers in the tendering and short listing process for the Waldron. Unfortunately this request was refused because the Forum may have knowledge of one of the bidders and there could be a potential conflict of interest.

The work of our Save Our NHS sub group covers a range of issues and it is next due to meet on Tuesday 21st July 2009, 1.30-3.30 at The Saville Centre, 436 Lewisham High Street, SE13 6LJ. The NHS is for everyone so everyone is welcome to get involved with this campaign group. Telephone 0208.690.7869 if you want to go on the Forum 'Save Our NHS' Campaign Group mailing list.

16 The Mercury, Wednesday, June 24, 2009

## The Mercury

### Controversy over polyclinic

A CONSULTATION into polyclinic plans has been approved by a council, despite opposition from campaigners. Health bosses want to add a GP surgery to the existing Waldron Heath Centre in Amersham Vale, New Cross, which would allow unregistered patients to see a doctor between 8am and 8pm, seven days a week. The consultation of 588 respondents found 73 per cent were in favour – but protesters have questioned the results. Lewisham Pensioners' Forum chairwoman Doris Smith said: "No consideration was made of

the 1,200 signatures we got on our petition opposing the plans. These plans mean the health centre will be run by private owners and lead to a lower standard of care." The survey was approved on Wednesday by the council's Healthier Communities Select Committee Committee member and Lib Dem group leader Chris Maines defended the "GP-led centre". He said: "People in New Cross and Evelyn are dying earlier. We need a service that will provide care for unregistered patients every day."

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## **17th Pensioners Parliament—Blackpool**

Our delegates have now submitted their reports and these will be available for our members at the next Forum meeting on July 29th 2009. If you would like a copy of the full report but are unable to attend the Forum then contact us The Saville Centre either in person or by phone and we will arrange to supply you with a copy.

## **Pensioners Day 16th September 2009**

Preparations for the day continue at a pace. Auditions for the pensioner talent show take place on July 7th and we have been overwhelmed by the response of so many older people to take part. We are confident that they will put on a great show for you. Our talent show case will be supported by the younger Deptford Green School Steel Band who I know so many of you have heard at events in and around the Borough. As older members of the community we all share in the responsibility of encouraging the development of our children's children and I am sure you will join with me in welcoming them onto the stage to perform for us.

Unfortunately I also have to share with you the frustration of cuts to our funding of this key annual event. We were bitterly disappointed to note that despite making every effort to cut our costs and meet the strict criteria laid down by Lewisham, we were only awarded £900 of the £2050.00 requested to help us meet the venue and marketing costs. This event is a huge success! Over 600 pensioners attended last year and this year we anticipate even bigger numbers. Large numbers of groups including numerous council services contact us months in advance to book stalls; the numbers are proving so great that we have even made arrangements to book the 'Pop-In' so that we can fit everyone in! We will of course be taking up our argument most strongly with Lewisham. This is a high profile event for older people in Lewisham and it is exceptionally well attended. But be assured, whatever happens the Forum WILL STAGE this annual event and it will still be affordable for everyone. This year the ticket price will be £2.00 and for the first time we are going to sell them in advance. Tickets will be available from our office at The Saville Centre from September 1st 2009. `

Continued:-

## Public Toilets Campaign

In November 2008 the Forum wrote to members of Lewisham Council requesting that the Authority develop a Public Toilet Strategy as a matter of urgency. Whilst the Forum has been briefed by the Cabinet Member for Older People, Cllr Peggy Fitzsimmons on one local development in Catford, we have not yet heard back on plans to implement a Public Toilet Strategy. We shall be raising the issue with Lewisham again so shall keep you posted.

Meanwhile, members might like to know about a three-year collaborative research project that will look at the issue of continence management in an ageing population. Continence is often an embarrassing subject, thus the aim of the research is to reduce the impact of continence difficulties and therefore help people, but especially older people, maintain a positive identity and improved quality of life.

The research will focus on improving continence interventions and services, developing assistive devices for continence management and challenging the environmental barriers, namely access to toilets, that may prevent people from being away from home. The project aims to collect information that will help designers think creatively about the design of these facilities in order to provide better environments for us all to use. Researchers aim to interview 100 people aged between 1-101 to build a 'whole-life' perspective towards using lavatory facilities when away from home. We are therefore looking for people of all ages to be involved in the project. **Interviews:**

30 minute interviews will be conducted with the research team in which we would ask people about their own experiences, thoughts and suggestions about the design and provision of public toilets. At the time of going to press we think a large number of volunteers have already been identified but you can still contact the team at: TACT3, Helen Hamlyn Centre, Royal College of Art, Kensington Gore, London SW7 2EU, Phone: 0207 590 4343.

**Doris Smith Chair  
Lewisham Pensioners Forum**



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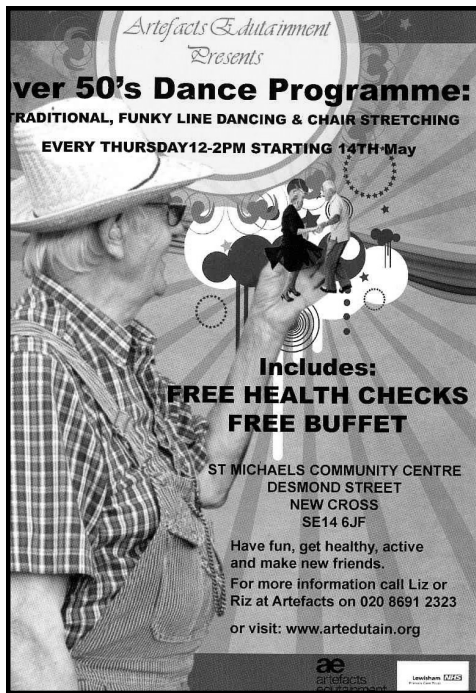
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Greenwich Theatre Box Office

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[www.greenwichtheatre.org.uk](http://www.greenwichtheatre.org.uk)

## Notice of Next Forum Meeting

Wednesday July 29th 2009

10.30-12.30

Rooms 1 & 2 Civic Suite, Catford, SE6 4RU

### AGENDA

1. Welcome—Thelma Daniels—Vice Chair LPForm
2. Screening of recent BBC Panorama documentary (9.4.09) - 'British Home Care Scandal'

*"Care of the elderly is a professional job. Assisting medication, feeding, changing, bathing, even using hoists demands a level of expertise we expect in the care of some of our most vulnerable people. But when Panorama went undercover in some of Britain's biggest homecare suppliers we found carers with little more training than they needed for a job in a burger bar". (Source: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/panorama/hi/front\\_page/newsid\\_7990000/7990682.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/panorama/hi/front_page/newsid_7990000/7990682.stm)).*

3. Speaker Audrey Marie Yates LB Lewisham—Home Care Services in Lewisham.
4. Speaker Brenda Bond—Chief Executive Age Concern Southwark & Lewisham—'Why the commissioning process is so important'.
5. Q & A session
6. Brief update on forthcoming Forum events and campaign activities—Kerry Smith, Forum Co-ordinator