

News from Lewisham Pensioners Forum

March-April 2009

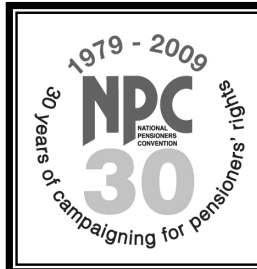
Dear Forum Member

I hope this Newsletter finds you all well after the snowy weather of February. Hopefully March and April will usher in warmer temperatures as we continue with our campaign work which will, for March and April, be focusing on the 'State Pension' and our 'Save our NHS' campaign.

On April 6th, the basic state pension will rise by just £4.55 a week and £2.70 for millions of women who rely on their husband's contributions. This will raise the pension to a mere £95.25 for a single pensioner. Such a low state basic pension means millions of pensioners remain on means-tested benefits and today's workers face poverty when they retire.

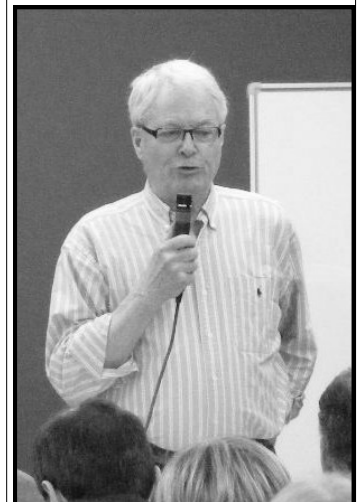
Only a decent state pension provides an effective and reliable way of guaranteeing real financial security in retirement.

This is why we are joining forces with the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) and other NPC affiliates up and down the country to organise a protest on Monday April 6th 2009. All Forum members are invited to **Join Us** in Catford, by Age Concern between 11.30 & 1.30pm as we make a stand for a decent state pension for all generations. The theme for our event is the harsh financial choices pensioners face as they struggle to manage on their state pension. We will be serving pea soup, and warming ourselves by an imitation brazier, financial advisors from Age Concern will be on hand to give out information as will staff from LB Lewisham's Sustainable Energy team. We shall also be collecting signatures for a petition that will be delivered to Gordon Brown. As a prelude to the event on the 6th, our next Forum meeting on Wednesday March 25th will be showing Channel 4's, Dispatches 'Eat or Heat' (Further details about both events can be found on page 2 and page 4.)



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Save Our NHS Campaign

Over 60 people attended a meeting the Forum's Save Our NHS Campaign meeting on Wednesday February 25th, convened to enable members of the public to discuss proposals for The Waldron Health Centre. The Primary Care Trust has recently published a consultation document *'Improving access to primary care, (cont.)*

Professor Colin Leys speaking at the Forum's 'Save Our NHS' public meeting on 25.2.09.
Our thanks to everyone who attended

Despite government suggestions that they have reformed pensions – our state pension system needs urgent attention in order to ensure real financial security for everyone in retirement, and end the over-reliance on private pension schemes which are governed by a volatile stock market.

(Source: NPC)

What would you choose?
'Food or Heating'
All Forum Members
Are invited to join us on a
Day of Action
Monday April 6th
11.30am-1.30pm
by the Age
Concern Offices
Catford Broadway,
SE6

WHAT WE NEED

As a first step, the state pension should be set above the official poverty level of £165 a week, paid to all men and women, and linked now to earnings or prices (whichever is the greater).

This could be financed through a number of measures, including:

Using the surplus in the National Insurance Fund, which currently stands £46bn, and is forecast to grow to £114bn by 2012

Abolishing the upper earnings limit on national insurance contributions which would raise at least £8bn a year

Scrapping higher rate tax relief and tax avoidance (through tax havens) on private pension contributions to raise up to £40bn a year. (Source: NPC)

Save Our NHS Campaign

...Cont'd from Page 1

A Consultation for Health Centre Services in North Lewisham, which is available from Libraries and Health Centres across the Borough or on telephone request (020 7206 3333). The consultation period for this document **closes on 6th April**. A primary concern of the meeting was that this document does not give the full picture and with this in mind the meeting agreed that an alternative view "*Why Say No to the GP Led Health Centre*" should be produced by the campaign group enabling the reader to make a more informed response. A copy of this flyer is sent with this newsletter.

The Forum is, as you know, taking an active interest in all aspects of the NHS and health care provision in Lewisham and we would ask you to take some time to read both documents and then submit your response to the PCT direct. (A prepaid envelope for your reply can be found in the PCTs consultation document mentioned earlier.)

On Monday March 30th, 9.30-10.30, Alan Johnson, the Government Health Minister will be visiting The Waldron Centre. The Save Our NHS campaign group intends using this opportunity to lobby him on the future of the Waldron and wider issues and you are of course welcome to get involved. Further details about the lobby will be available after the next campaign meeting scheduled for Wednesday March 11 2009, 7.00pm, in the Amersham Vale Training Practice, Suite 5 at The Waldron Health Centre.

If you want to go on the mailing list for the Save Our NHS campaign group please contact Tamsin Bacchus at the Forum on 020.8690.7869.

A Cautionary Tale from a Forum member

Forum member Mrs M, contacted us expressing her frustration at the apparent introduction of new parking controls at the car park serving Lidl, JD Sports and others in Catford. Where once Mrs M thought you could park for up to one hour for free with no restriction, she recently discovered that you must now ensure that you do use at least one of the shops on the site to qualify for free parking. Mrs M received in the post a fine for £90 and was told she had been seen leaving the site after parking her car. We today spoke with one of the parking attendants and checked the sign and it does indeed warn you that you should not leave the site to qualify for the free two hour parking.

An issue for us to look into and take forward we think!

AGE
Concern

Lewisham and Southwark

Want to tell you about a Café/Bookshop in Catford and an important, topical conference on 3rd April

'Café Number Ten'

Coming soon to Catford Broadway

A new approach to fundraising!

The Café will capture a wider customer base with coffee, other beverages and snacks.

Attractive to all potential customers regardless background or tastes.

The shop launches in April and will also sell artwork and recycled books.

Existing work will carry on as normal for information and advice, and also Age Concern insurance products.

Spring Seminar

"Dementia on the Rise: a 21st Century Issue?"

Friday 3rd April 10.00 to 12.30

Civic Suite, Lewisham Town Hall.

Important discussion on the new "Dementia Strategy" with speakers from central Government and the Department of Health.

Free but limited places. Please register in advance to secure one.

020 7701 9700

mou.mukherjee@acls.org.uk

Forum Constitution

Members may recall

the request to submit comments and proposals for the revision of our Constitution.

This is to remind you that the cut off point for this is the end of June.

For a further copy ring the office or pick one up from our stall or at any Forum meeting.

'Lewisham Celebrates Retirement on March 26th 2009'

Older people have a unique contribution to make to their families, their communities and society. To celebrate this, the Council has organised a special event to highlight the experience, diversity and interests of older people. **All retired people in Lewisham are invited to attend the event on Thursday 26th March at the Civic Suite in Catford from 11am.** Focusing on the positive aspects of ageing and retirement, the event will include speakers and exhibitions showcasing the services and activities available from the Council, voluntary organisations and local businesses.

Stalls and activities will include: 'Pit stop' Health MOTs, massage therapies - 'Money Room' Information on entitlements as you reach 60 and beyond and advice on dealing with money issues - 'Using Computers' How to make the most of the internet/troubleshooting on computers - 'Travel Point' Find out where a Freedom Pass can take you! - 'Stay Active' Find out about free swimming, leisure activities, social groups and more.

For further information call Sarah Chan on 07918 028859 or email schan.comms@googlemail.com

Source: *'Lewisham Life'* March 2009 and Cllr Peggy Fitzsimmons, Cabinet Member for Older People, LB Lewisham

Contacting Us

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Membership & Admin: Tamsin

*"Providing a campaigning
voice for pensioners in
Lewisham"*

Planning Meeting for Pensioners Day 16.9.09

***** Call for Volunteers *****

**Get involved in the planning and the day itself
Register your interest with Kerry or Tamsin at
the Forum on 020.8690.7869**

**First Planning meeting at The Saville Centre on
Tuesday 28th April 2009, 10.30-12.30**

**Final Planning and run through at The Broadway
Theatre on Thursday 10th September, 10am**

Recruiting New Members to Lewisham Pensioners Forum

The more members we have the more effective we can be and "word of mouth" is the best way to spread the news. We have enclosed with this newsletter our membership form with details of what we are and what we do. Think about giving this to a friend or neighbour to get them signed up too. Becoming a member means you receive the bi-monthly newsletter but it does not oblige you to come to any or all of the meetings, although would be very happy to see you at some. Membership is free and you don't even need to send back the form, a phone call will do on 020. 8690.7869.

Thank You for your Support

Notice of Next Forum Meeting

Wednesday March 25th 2009

10.30am-12.45

Rooms 1 & 2 Civic Suite, Catford, SE6

AGENDA

- 1. Brief presentation by LB Lewisham on *Regenerating Lewisham*
(The consultation period ends 31st March!)**
- 2. Showing of Channel 4's Dispatches Documentary 'Eat or Heat'
(Difficult choices facing pensioners struggling on a pension)
being shown in the run up to our**

Day of Action on 6th April