

## News from Lewisham Pensioners Forum May/June 2009

### Contacting Us

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Phone: 020 8690 7869  
**"a campaigning voice"**

Dear Forum Member

### **State pension - Campaign Update**

Campaigns and events continue to dominate the Forum's agenda. At our recent Day of Action, on April 6<sup>th</sup>, staged in collaboration with the National Pensioners Convention (NPC), nearly 500 members of the public signed our petition which called upon this Government to raise the basic state pension above the official poverty level of £165.00 a week for all pensioners and increase it annually in line with earnings or prices (whichever is the greater). Similar events were staged up and down the country. Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary summed up the situation when she recently said:

*"It's a national disgrace that at least 1 in 4 pensioners are living below the official poverty line, and millions more are struggling to meet the rising costs of living. Today's increase in the basic state pension doesn't go anyway near far enough to help protect pensioners against the economic crisis. Millions have lost money from their savings, whilst others see their utility, food, housing and council tax bills rising way above their pension. In light of the current increases in the costs of living - pensioners simply cannot afford to survive. We need a change of direction in pension policy before it's too late."*

*"For years ministers have relied on both means-tested benefits and the availability of private pension schemes to provide a decent income in retirement - but the whole basis of this strategy is unravelling - with means-testing remaining unpopular and ineffective at getting money to the poorest and many decent company pensions being replaced by insecure money-purchase schemes. Billions of pounds have been wiped off private pension funds in recent weeks - and up to 5m workers now face an insecure retirement."*

*"Pensioners - both now and in the future - need dignity and security in retirement that only a decent state pension can provide. The government should use the huge £47bn surplus in the National Insurance Fund and give everyone a pension that takes them out of poverty. It's not acceptable that there's billions for bankers, but peanuts for pensioners."*

Our members might like to note that that the Forum wrote to the 3 Lewisham MPs inviting them to join us on this Day of Action, unfortunately none were able, so instead we have sent them a copy of the petition inviting them to provide us with their response. We shall keep you posted. Our thanks however go to Sir Steve Bullock - Mayor of Lewisham, Cllr Peggy Fitzsimmons, and Darren Johnson London Assembly Member for giving their support to the event and volunteering to serve pea soup. Our thanks also to Brenda Bond, Chief Executive of Age Concern Southwark & Lewisham, for letting us use tables and chairs etc. from the Catford Branch and for giving us access to the First Aid skills of James, and to Street Trading of LB Lewisham who gave us a pitch for the day. (Photos taken on the day are shown on page 4).

## End Fuel Poverty

**Public Meeting on Thursday May 28<sup>th</sup>, 7-9pm, St Andrew's United Reformed Church, corner of Brockley Road and Wickham Road, SE4 2SA.**

Those members who were able to attend our March forum meeting may recall the request received from the 'End Fuel Poverty Coalition' for our members to write to Joan Ruddock urging her to support the Fuel Poverty Bill which if made law would 'enact measures to end the scandal of cold homes, cut emissions of carbon dioxide to reduce climate changes and generate tens of thousands of 'green jobs' and cut costs to the health service'. The coalition reminded us that Labour's election manifestos for 2001 and 2005 pledged to end fuel poverty yet the Fuel Poverty Bill designed to achieve this did not get the support of our local MP Joan Ruddock, Minister for Climate Change Minister, when it had its first reading.

The 'End Fuel Poverty Coalition' has therefore arranged a Public Meeting. When we staged our Day of Action recently we wanted to make our politicians face up to the fact that pensioners have to choose between eating and heating. The coalition estimates that 3,000 older people in Lewisham alone have to make this choice. This cannot continue and we cannot let our own MP stand in the way of the Bill's passage through Parliament! The public meeting is free, no booking is required and we hope that a large number of forum members will be able to attend giving a voice to older people in Lewisham.

## Social Care for Older People

On June 10<sup>th</sup>, 5 pensioner representatives from the Forum will be joining forces with Age Concern and Help the Aged to take part in a mass lobby of the Government on Social care for older people. Many of us recognise that the current system of care is failing older people, yet the Government persists in refusing to accept that it needs to take responsibility for this and commit to providing quality care for everyone who needs it. Do you have an experience of the social care service that you would like us to draw to the attention of your MP? We are keen to ensure that the experiences of our members are conveyed to our 3 Members of Parliament and would therefore invite you to share in confidence your story with us by either writing to Lewisham Pensioners Forum, The Saville Centre, 436 Lewisham High Street, SE13 6LJ or by contacting Kerry Smith on 020 8690 7869.

On a similar theme I read in April's edition of *'Forum to Forum'* (a Help the Aged publication), that a group in Lancashire are interested in hearing from anyone who is aware of the problem of clothes going missing in a care home environment. Isabelle Smith, Chair of the East Lancs. Partnership Board is concerned that the problem of clothes going astray is not being dealt with and wonders if it is intended to encourage families and friends to take personal washing home to launder on behalf of their loved ones, 'leaving those residents who have no close relatives vulnerable to a great loss of dignity'. Contact details are Rossendale Senior Advisory Group, 428 Rochdale Road, Britannia, Bacup, Lancs OL13 9SD or email: [ajandbelle.smith@ntlworld.com](mailto:ajandbelle.smith@ntlworld.com).

## 17<sup>th</sup> Pensioners Parliament – Blackpool

Also happening in June is the 17<sup>th</sup> Pensioners Parliament in Blackpool. This year 4 delegates will be attending as representatives of the Forum. The theme for the Parliament this year is 'Democracy & Rights'. Our delegates will be going along to debates and workshops on 'Age Equality and what it means', 'Pensioners and the general election', 'Dignity in Care', 'Holding the NHS to account', 'Pensioners and the economy', 'Building the Pensioner Movement' and the ongoing campaign for Free Travel. Delegates will be providing the Forum with a full report back and this will be made available to members at the July Forum meeting. If you are unable to attend the Forum meeting scheduled for July 29<sup>th</sup>, 10:30-12:30 but want to have a copy of this report then please contact Kerry on 020 8690 7869 in July.

## Pensioners Day – Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2009, 12noon till 4pm

The Forum staff and volunteers are already busy working at planning this year's event which we hope will attract pensioners from all over Lewisham. The point of mentioning the event here is to draw your attention to the 'Request for Volunteers Notice' and the call to sign up for our own 'Pensioners Have Got Talent' spot on pages 6 and 7 of this newsletter. Pensioners Day is a success because it is run by pensioners for pensioners. Help us make this year's event even bigger and better; get involved, volunteer, audition for the talent spot, tell your friends about the day and come along and have fun.

And to conclude this newsletter, a comment from Mick Kavanagh, a member of the Forum's Management committee, on the recent passing of Jack Jones alongside an extract of his obituary taken from the BBC news website.

*Just as we were going to print I was told that our dear friend and long-term Forum member **George Granville** had passed away on the evening of May 6th after a short illness. George was truly a Forum stalwart, he was extremely hardworking and was committed to bringing about change and fighting discrimination and injustice. He will be deeply missed by so many of us and our thoughts at this sad time go to his family who he was so very proud of.*

Doris Smith  
Chair Lewisham  
Pensioners Forum

"Lewisham Pensioners Forum deeply regrets the passing of Jack Jones, a stalwart of the Labour and Trade Union movement and one of the founding members of the Modern Retired Peoples Movement. We extend our profound sympathy to all the family."

*Jack Jones, who led the Transport and General Workers' Union in the 1970s, has died at the age of 96. His son Mick said Mr Jones died peacefully in a care home in Peckham, south London, on Tuesday evening. Mr Jones was born in Liverpool and was general secretary of the TGWU from 1969 to 1978 at a time when it was one of the country's most powerful unions.*



*Veteran Labour politician Tony Benn described Mr Jones as "one of the finest men" he ever met. "I feel a real sense of personal bereavement," he told BBC Radio 4's Today programme. "Everything he said, he believed. He was bitterly attacked [but] if he was powerful it was only because he represented people." (Source: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/8011514.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8011514.stm))*

# Photographs from the Day of Action—6<sup>th</sup> April 2009



Top: Cllr Peggy Fitzsimmons, Cabinet Member for Older People, LB Lewisham with Lewisham Pensioners Forum Chair, Doris Smith.

Middle right: London Assembly Member Darren Johnson, & Cllr Romaine Phoenix with Forum members calling on the Government to raise the state pension to £165.00pw.



Middle left: Sir Steve Bullock - Mayor of Lewisham, signing the petition with Forum Member Eileen Ganney.

Bottom: The day in action!



**Access to Art (A2A) - The National Gallery** opens its doors to disabled and older people at a special inclusive access evening, **6pm to 8pm Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> June.**

The Gallery will lower the hang of some special paintings to enable visitors using wheelchairs to view examine these key works at a close distance. Wheelchairs can be borrowed and help will be available. Specialist assistance, with BSL and lip speaking interpretation for the hard of hearing, and the "Art Through Words" service—a detailed description for the partially sighted, is also on hand. There will also be Braille, large print and raised line drawings. Come along to an extraordinary evening.

For further details about parking, transport, reserving a wheelchair and booking a trained assistant contact Access to Art—020 8761 4898 or [info@access2art.org.uk](mailto:info@access2art.org.uk)

**'Keep Our NHS Public'**  
**Campaign Update—Doris Smith**

**The Waldron Health Centre:** Over 1200 people in Lewisham signed a petition opposing plans to privately tender health services within the The Waldron. Unfortunately Alan Johnson the Minister for Health at the last minute, cancelled his plans to visit the Waldron on March 30<sup>th</sup> and our plans to present him with the petition had to be altered. The planned demonstration opposing the proposals of the PCT did however go ahead and the petition was instead presented to Gill Galliano, Chief Executive of Lewisham's PCT a few days later. At this meeting we were told that the PCT is responding to a Government directive to have a GP led surgery in Lewisham. In light of this it was agreed that members of the campaign group would lobby their local MP to find out why the Government is insisting that the PCT explore initiatives that invite the private sector into a public national health service. At the time of going to print our members have not yet lobbied the MP's but we shall bring you up to date in our next newsletter.

On a separate but related matter, I was pleased to see in *The Guardian* on April 25<sup>th</sup> 2009, a letter from **Dr Hamish Meldrum** Chairman, British Medical Association saying...

*"We must dispel this myth that the private sector can always do better. While there will always be opportunities to improve efficiency, the NHS consistently provides high-quality care at exceptionally good value for money.*

Writing as Chair of Lewisham Pensioners Forum and the 'Keep our NHS Public' campaign group, I have sent a letter to '*The Guardian*', saying that we too are concerned that lessons are not being learnt. We cannot afford to allow NHS funding to be leaked into the private sector. We have only to look at the fragmentation of British Rail and the exploitation by the providers of gas and electricity to see why we should oppose the fragmentation of the NHS into the private sector and **Keep Our NHS PUBLIC!**

If you would like to get involved in our campaign to keep the NHS public, then do think about coming to our next campaign meeting on May 19<sup>th</sup> or telephone 020 8690 7869 and ask to be put on the mailing list for information. Everyone is welcome, young and old.

**Notice of NHS Campaign Group Meeting**

**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2009**

**1:30-3:30pm, The Saville Centre, 436 Lewisham High Street**

**Event Notice**

**Caring for Carers—Lewisham Carers Week Event 2009**

**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2009**

**10:00 to 3:00pm (drop in any time)      Civic Suite, Town Hall, Catford.**

Information event for people who are currently caring or have been caring for someone in the past. Information available includes looking after your own health, benefits advice, help with caring and how to get a break. There will be stalls and a series of talks, workshops and videos on carer issues. Plus therapies to enjoy; singing and laughter therapies, facials and massages, relaxation session.

To secure a place and book lunch contact Laura, Jenner on 020.8314.3863

# The Forum Pensioners' Day 2009

## Volunteers Needed for Pensioners Day

The first planning meeting with Forum volunteers took place on 28<sup>th</sup> April. A lot of ground was covered by the 10 volunteers who attended and with their help we have now put together an outline for the staging of the event which will need up to 40 volunteers.

### Can You Help?

A list of the jobs for the day is given below. Please look to see if you can spare a few hours on the day to help cover one of these jobs and contact **Kerry or Tamsin on 020 8690.7869.**

It is essential that all volunteers attend a **final planning meeting at the Theatre on Thursday September 10<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00am** to go through all the arrangements. Volunteers unfortunately cannot be allocated jobs on Pensioners Day itself.

A strong Team of 5 to assist mobility guests into theatre and get lunch	A Team of 10 to give out up to 700 lunch bags	Team of 6 to sell raffle tickets (this helps fund the event)
Team of 2 to give out water and juice alongside the lunch bags	Team of 3 to help with 'signing in' up to 700 guests.	Team of 4 to deal with ticket sales on door.
<b>Extra</b> Team of 20 to distribute leaflets in advance at Lewisham & Deptford-Markets	Strong team of 2 to set up food area and change food crates over.	Team of 2 to oversee lunch bag disposal

### What can the volunteer expect?

On the day arrive at the Theatre for 10am

Help set up and be ready for doors open at 12 noon

(Mobility volunteers start at 11.30am)

Most of the work will take place between 10-1pm but some tasks such as raffle ticket sales will be active until 2.30.

Volunteers will get a lunch bag but eating the contents will need to be juggled around volunteering duties

Volunteers will be given Forum T-shirt to wear on top of their clothes and comfortable shoes are a must!

on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September

## New for 2009

### 'Pensioners Have Got Talent Showcase'



To be staged at  
the Broadway Theatre Catford  
for  
The Forum's Pensioners Day

Have you got a talent that you want to showcase?  
Do you belong to a group that would like the opportunity to  
perform in front of 700 pensioners?

*If the answer is "YES!" then come along and  
be part of our entertainment for  
Pensioners Day 2009.*

### Auditions for 'Pensioners Have Got Talent'

To be held on Tuesday July 7<sup>th</sup>, 10:30am-3:30pm  
at The Saville Centre, 436 Lewisham High Street.

To confirm a place call Kerry or Tamsin on  
020 8690 7869

*Most acts considered!*





*Next Forum Meeting  
New Venue & Different Day  
**Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June 10.30 am**  
**St Laurence Centre**  
**37 Bromley Road Catford**  
(a short walk from the Town Hall complex)  
(Buses: 47, 54, 75, 124, 136, 160, 171, 181, 185,  
199, 202, 208, 284 & 336)*

## **Agenda**

### **Speakers, Questions and Information Stands “Health Matters”**

**10.30: Introduction**

**10.35: Val Amy on macular degeneration of the eye**

**10.50: Lewisham PCT panel on breast & bowel cancer and lung disease**

**11.15—12.00: Break to talk one to one to speakers and go round PCT information tables on Healthy Living options and free London Borough of Lewisham sports opportunities (swimming, bowls, etc.)**

**12.00: Speaker from the local Ambulance Service on what happens when you make an emergency call.**

**12.15: Closing Forum notices and notification of future events  
(Stand at People’s Day on 11<sup>th</sup> July—Pensioners’ Day on 16<sup>th</sup> September)**

Lewisham Pensioners Forum is very grateful to the Turkish Elders Club that meets regularly in the St. Laurence Centre on Friday mornings for opening their doors to our Forum Meeting while the Civic Suite is unavailable.

To contact the Lewisham Pensioners Forum ring 020 8690 7869 or e-mail [lpf@btconnect.com](mailto:lpf@btconnect.com)

