

And once again for our Individual Members we enclose on behalf of the Council a copy of its "My Life" Magazine. Groups that have not received any of these should contact Lewisham Marketing and Communication on 020 8314 9942.

News from Lewisham Pensioners' Forum March 2010

www.lewishampensionersforum.org.uk

Funds raised for Haiti. The sum of £41.60 donated at our January Forum has been sent, via the Salvation Army who have staff there, specifically to help the older people in Port au Prince affected by the earthquake in Haiti.

Contacting Us

The Saville Centre
436 Lewisham High St.
London SE13 6LJ
Phone: 020 8690 7869
lpf@btconnect.com
Core Office Hours 10-2
Monday to Thursday
Please ring in advance of calling in, especially if outside of these times.

Dear Forum Member

Like many of you I have been cheered by a glimpse of the sun and hope that soon we will be enjoying the delights of the spring weather and travelling to and from our campaign activities in more pleasant conditions. There is certainly a lot going on in the campaign world and I hope that this newsletter brings you up-to-date and informs you about other events.

The National Pensioners Convention has been very active on a number of topics which impact on us and I thought it might be useful to bring you up to date with a few of their recent press releases:

Millions angry at 0% SERPS rise

Millions of pensioners are angry at the Chancellor's decision in the December pre-Budget report to freeze this year's increase in SERPS and deferred state pensions. Tucked away in the detail of the pre-Budget document was the announcement that for the first time ever, the annual increase in the state pension would not be equally applied to additional pensions such as Graduated Pension or SERPS.

Those who have opted to defer taking their state pension will also miss out on the usual 10.4% increase.

For many pensioners, their state second pension provides a much needed supplement to the pitifully low basic pension.

At a time when the costs of living are beginning to rise, this decision means that many older people will be getting an increase in their state pension that is well below inflation. Frank Cooper, NPC president said: "It was a shabby tactic by the Chancellor to hide his decision not to uprate all elements of the state pension."

The NPC has produced a letter which will be available for members at the next Forum meeting that can be sent to the Chancellor calling for him to reverse his decision.

(Source: <http://www.npcuk.org/>)

NPC meet with Payments Council

Last month the NPC reported the public criticism at the Payments Council's decision to phase out the use of cheques by 2018. Following this publicity, the Council asked to meet with the NPC to discuss their proposal. At the meeting they confirmed that before cheques could be withdrawn there would need to be a suitable paper-based alternative that was being used by a significant number of people.

The head of the Payments Council, Paul Smee also confirmed that the NPC would now be included in any future consultations on the subject.

In addition, he was keen that the views of pensioners were fed into the discussions and agreed to organise workshops for older people to give their views.

Syd Ashby, NPC vice president said: "The Payments Council has now recognised that they must listen to the voices of older people when it comes to the issue of cheques."

(Source: <http://www.npcuk.org/>)

Winter Fuel Payments - Have you Claimed?

"The Winter Fuel Payment for over 60s is designed to help older people with their heating bills over the winter period. Older people who meet the criteria can get between £125 and £400 depending on their circumstances...

At a meeting of the Full Council on 27 January, councillors called on the Mayor to make sure residents in the borough were aware of how they could get help with fuel payments. The Mayor has since written a letter to all households, which was distributed alongside February's edition of the borough magazine "Lewisham Life." (You should have received one of these letters—if you haven't done so or want more information contact Liz or Sue at LBL on 020 8314 6339. There will also be an information stand at our Forum meeting on 31st March.) (Source: <http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/NewsAndEvents/News/WinterFuelPayments.htm>)

NHS Creeping Privatisation

In February I was reassured by a Press Release from the British Medical Association which called on GP Members to involve their patients and the public in the fight against the increasing role of commercial companies in the provision of NHS care in England. It says and I quote..."There is little evidence that competition between providers has driven up quality or pushed down costs. Instead we've had a series of expensive reforms such as the private finance initiative and payment by results, together with hundreds of millions being spent on management consultants—all at a time when, more than ever, the NHS needs to ensure that we protect money for frontline services." I have taken the liberty of emailing the article to our 3 MPs, all Lewisham Councillors and the Joint Director of Public Health. The Forum's "Save Our NHS" Group continues to campaign against the creeping privatisation of our NHS and holds regular campaign group meetings. If you would like to get involved with the work of this group do let us know and we can add your details to the mailing list.

Finally, in the run up to the local and general elections the Forum will be organising Hustings events for our members, provisional dates are consecutive Tuesdays, **April 20th and April 27th**. A special election newsletter with confirmed details will be sent out to all our members just after the Easter Break.

Doris Smith—Chair Lewisham Pensioners Forum

Stop Press!

Members will be interested to note that the British Medical Association (BMA) has just written to the Government calling on them to suspend the planned programme of putting our medical records onto a national data base. Our neighbours in Bromley and Greenwich have already received notification from their respective NHS providers informing them about plans to transfer individual records. The BMA has expressed serious concerns that the process is being carried out too quickly and that GPs do not have the time to support patients in making an informed choice.

Dr Hamish Meldrum, Chairman of Council at the BMA, says:

"The break-neck speed with which this programme is being implemented is of huge concern. Patients' right to opt out is crucial, and it is extremely alarming that records are apparently being created without them being aware of it. If the process continues to be rushed, not only will the rights of patients be damaged, but the limited confidence of the public and the medical profession in NHS I.T. will be further eroded."

The Forum's NHS Campaign Group will be monitoring the position in Lewisham and will feed back to Forum Members as soon as it is able to.

**We are having a tea dance!
Just Older Youths—JOY**

Community Group

Saturday March 20th 2pm to 6pm

All Saints Community Centre,
New Cross Road, SE14

rsvp: JOY 07709 905 088

Fundraising event for
Lewisham Diabetic Group **£5**



**Dame Cicely Saunders Concert Series
Fundraising for St. Christopher's Hospice**

A series of monthly concerts with internationally renowned professional musicians from around the World. Held on the first Thursday of the month between 7.30 and 9.30 in the Hospice—Lawrie Park Road, Sydenham.

Tickets are just £10 and include canapés and a glass of wine. To reserve a place phone Debbie Calvert on 020 8769 4747.

*1 April: *The London Cellophonic* *3 June: *The Fortuna Trio*
*6 May: *An evening of traditional Irish music*

**'Democracy - It Was Good
While It Lasted'**

As part of the Telegraph Hill Festival, Barrie Hall, Comedian and Broadcaster, will be giving a talk and a call to action as he argues that we now live in a post-democracy or fake democratic society where the gap between people and the political elite is widening with dire consequences.

**Venue: Upstairs at "The Telegraph"
87 Dennetts Road, SE14 5LW**
(regrettably fairly steep stairs & no lift)

**Date Sunday 21 March 2010 from
8pm—9pm**

Safer Transport in Lewisham

Lewisham Council and the police are working together to make bus journeys around Lewisham safer. We would like to invite you to come to the event on **Thursday 22 April** which will be held just outside of Lewisham Shopping Centre between 11am - 5pm, where there will be information and advice available.

You will also have opportunity to speak to officers confidentially if you wish.

As well as promoting safer transport, personal safety, and preventing criminal damage information will be available on the policing pledge, recruitment, volunteering, stop and search, road safety, and Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

**For more information contact June Al Malah on
020 8314 8020**

**FREE HOME FIRE
SAFETY CHECKS**

We promoted this service in the last newsletter but there were apparently some problems when people phoned and were told their post-code was outside the area covered.

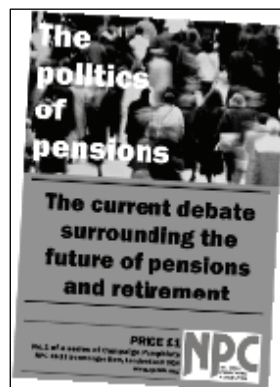
This has now been sorted out and we have established that the whole of the London

Borough of Lewisham is entitled to this service.

And it is a great service—You simply arrange for the operative Mike to come and look at where you live. He will give you simple advice and on the same appointment (no fussing around with a second call out) will fix the smoke alarms needed. Light and discrete these alarms can be fixed to even an old plaster ceiling and the testing is done by poking them with a broom handle!

Well worth doing for your peace of mind, so just ring 0845 026 1055 and fix a date.

The NPC's new pamphlet for 2010 is the first in a series of publications which aim to give campaigners the arguments they need to make the case for a decent state pension. Full of facts and figures; *The Politics of Pensions* has a foreword by Rodney Bickerstaffe and is essential reading for all those demanding a higher state pension. The Forum has ordered this new pamphlet which we hope to have available for sale for £1 at the forthcoming Forum on Wednesday March 31st.



Notice of Forum Meeting

Wednesday March 31st 2010

10:30-12:30

Rooms 1 & 2 Civic Suite, Town Hall Catford

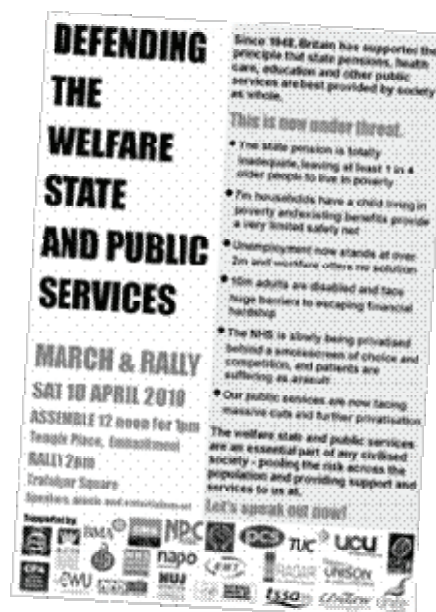
INVITED SPEAKERS

1. **Barry Todman Chair of the National Pensioners Convention** speaking on the forthcoming Public Demonstration in April to Defend the Welfare State and Public Services and other NPC Campaigns

100,000 copies of this leaflet are being circulated to pensioners, carers, trade unions, disabled people and other groups across the UK © NPC

Plans are now well under way for the major national demonstration in defence of the welfare state and public services, the NPC can reveal.

Thousands of pensioners, trade unionists, carers, health workers, disabled campaigners and the unemployed are expected to take part. The Forum has booked transport to attend the rally—you can book a space by contacting 020 86907869



2. **A Short Presentation by the Environment Agency on essential Flood Defence information for Lewisham residents with a FREE Essential Flood Defence Kit**

Also on this occasion—someone from the team at LBL advising on Winter Fuel payment claims will be on hand to answer your questions.

TEA PARTIES FOR OLDER CARERS 70+

“Are you in this age group and caring for your wife, husband, child, partner or friend? Why not come to the Carers Centre - meet new people; have a break from your caring role; find out what support there is for you; how to go about getting a break from caring.

We can provide transport and someone to sit with the person you are caring for, you can also bring the person you are caring for if this is difficult.”

*All this takes place at the **Carers Centre, Waldram Place, Forest Hill, SE23 2LB** between 12.30 – 3.*

Dates coming up: **Wednesday 24 March, Wednesday 14 April, and Thursday 13 May**
For more information and to register please give Ulalee at Lewisham Carers a ring on 020 8699 8686. (Source: <http://static.carers.org/files/newsletter-spring-10-4856.pdf>)