

Lewisham Pensioners' Forum

September 2011

www.lewishampensionersforum.org

Contacting Us
The Saville Centre,
436 Lewisham High St. SE13 6LJ
Phone: 020 8690 7869
lpf@btconnect.com
Please ring in advance of calling in,
especially if outside our core times,
10am-2pm Monday to Thursday

Dear Forum Member

In the last newsletter we promised a look at what is happening in the debate about the future of social care. In summary form below, we have tried to capture some of the strands that feature in this debate.

The Future of Social Care

Last year the Government asked the economist Andrew Dilnot to look into how the system of funding in social care in England could be changed amid concerns that it is getting harder for people to get state help towards care costs. The current system which is acknowledged as being confusing and unfair leaves people with the worry of how they or family members will meet care costs. Add to this the additional factors of a booming aged population that is going to live longer, the ongoing squeeze on council budgets, and the collapse of some care home providers in the private sector, it is easy to see why social care is at crisis point.

In recent months two major reports have attempted to address the topic of social care; the 'Law Commission on Care Legislation' and the 'Dilnot Commission Care Funding', and while both have recommended reform to care and support in England, neither is a guarantee for reform.

In brief, the key recommendations of the Dilnot Commission call for:-

1. A system that people understand providing trustworthy and joined up information so that people can plan for their future care.
2. A limit on the maximum costs that people will face so they can plan how they will meet those costs with a lifetime cap of £35,000. (This cap would not however include so-called "hotel costs" for food and accommodation which should have a standard charge of between £7-10,000 per year.)
3. An end to the ever-tightening restrictions placed on getting help - creating a national standard so everyone has the same access regardless of where they live.
4. An increase in the means test threshold from £23,250 to £100,000¹

As you can see, the Dilnot Commission has ruled out calling for care to be free but is instead recommending

a partnership between the state and individual—and this translates into the financial services sector coming up with financial products such as insurance and equity release schemes that the individual would pay into to plan for the possibility of needing care in their old age. Perhaps it might be timely at this point to remind ourselves of the thousands of people up and down the country who planned for their retirement by investing in pension plans but now find they have NOTHING because of the collapse of pension funds and final salary pension schemes which they paid into over their working lives.

Twenty-six charities, including Age UK and the Alzheimer's Society, say political leaders "must not let reform fall off the table for another generation" and called for politicians to hold cross party talks on reforming the care system². On the eve of the publication of the Dilnot Report the labour leader, Ed Miliband commented in the *Metro*, 'This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity which our generation must address'³. *The Sunday Telegraph* reported that Ed Miliband had written to the Prime Minister and Nick Clegg to offer talks "in good faith" with no pre-conditions.

Like members of the Care Alliance, the Forum will be calling on the Government to set out a clear timetable for change⁴. The Forum would not, however, support any proposals that are subject to the vagaries of the financial markets—social care is too important to leave to political differences, the profit motives of the private sector or the highs and lows of the stock market. It is "political will" that determines the availability of funding and we will urge all parties to exercise their political will in the interests of everyone, because after all the one thing that is guaranteed is that we will all age.

The Law Commission review of adult social care law has completed its work and has published proposals for new social care legislation. The review itself concluded a year earlier than expected so that its conclusions can be brought together with those of the Dilnot Commission, to inform a single parliamentary Bill in 2012.

Significant new proposals include:

- A national framework for eligibility that would

(unlike current guidance) 'stipulate basic minimum entitlements to services'

- Local Authorities having a duty to assess the needs of carers, and a duty (rather than, as at present, a power) to meet carers' eligible needs.
- People should be able to use direct payments to purchase residential care.
- Local Authorities to be able to delegate aspects of the assessment process to other organisations – but the Local Authority must 'retain overall control of the process'.
- Local Authorities should be required to do more to enable people with care needs to move from one local authority to another⁵.

It is also stated that the role of social services in leading and co-ordinating safeguarding of adults who are at risk of abuse or neglect should be set out in legislation rather than, as at present, left to guidance.

These changes to the way that the law is set out are potentially as important as changes to the actual content of the law. They could help people who use services and their families to make use of the law, greater clarity would make it easier to settle disputes at an early stage so would mean fewer unnecessary and expensive court cases, and Local Authorities would have no excuse for ignoring or failing to comply with legislation.

The path from here to the 2012 Bill is therefore likely to be one of the most significant transitions in the history of social care and here at the Forum we will do our best to keep you informed about these developments and we will debate with you at the Forum meetings our ongoing response.

Beatrice Scott, one of our co-opted management committee members has been charged with the responsibility of monitoring adult social care locally and nationally, and she has written a short piece enclosed with this newsletter to share with you.

On a completely separate topic, we were recently contacted by a Forum supporter who alerted us to a possible **anomaly concerning eligibility for concessionary funding for adult education.**

Currently (subject to benefit entitlement) a fee concession is only available to pensioners 65 years or over on 31st August 2011. As the retirement age for women is currently 60 years, and at this point they lose the job-seekers' concession, the concern is that this policy will have negative equality implications between retired men and women. We have now had a response from L B Lewisham which reads:

"In light of the anticipated reduction in funding from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), charges for Community Education Lewisham courses were considered as part of a Council-wide review of fees and charges.

Although the SFA only entitles a concessionary rate for people claiming Job Seekers' Allowance and Employment Support Allowance, a decision was taken that an age-related concessionary rate should be retained in Lewisham. It was agreed that this would apply to everyone aged 65 or older, which would mean that older people would not need to pay the full cost of any course they might wish to access. Pensioners' Forum has highlighted issues in the way this concession relates to women between the ages of 60 and 64 and officers will therefore look again at this issue.

An update will be provided to Pensioners' Forum by the end of September."

We will update you further on this one.

A number of you have sent in **questions for the Mayor** to address in his speech at Pensioners Day— Thank You. A timely opportunity perhaps for me to remind you all that **Pensioners Day** is on **Wednesday 21st September**. A colour flyer is enclosed so you can share the information. This year we are delighted to welcome Rodney Bickerstaffe among our guest speakers. We are staging a pensioners talent showcase and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the performers who are freely giving their time on the day as well as putting in rehearsal time— Thank You. There will be lots of information stalls and a hugely informative goody bag is being put together for you all as I write, with inserts from a host of contributors. Tickets are now on sale - come on your own or come with friends, everyone is welcome.

Finally, just to give notice that the Forum's **Annual General Meeting** will take place on **Wednesday 23rd November 2011** and not the 31st as previously publicised. Management Committee Nomination forms are available from the office on request.

Doris Smith

Chair, Lewisham Pensioners Forum

1. www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-13980493
2. www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-14004969
3. www.metro.co.uk/news/
4. <http://thehardesthit.wordpress.com/>
5. <http://ageukblog.org.uk/2011/05/11/a-new-legal-framework-for-social-care-the-law-commission-reports>

Forum Fundraising

Big Book Sale - Sunday 9th October

From 10am to 4pm in the Saville Centre, 436 Lewisham High Street, SE13 6LJ



We're getting the books but will need buyers to turn up in droves on the day. Please let friends and family know that there will be bargains galore—hardbacks mostly £1 or £2 paperbacks 25p or five for £1—with tea and cakes and a bit of bric-a-brac and all proceeds going towards keeping the Forum running. And since we will also be taking donations of books on the day there will be treasures to be found whether you are early or late.

Natwest Community Force

How you can help Lewisham Pensioners Forum

The Natwest Community Force has invited funding applications for the sum of £6000. This is roughly what it costs us to produce and post the newsletter for a year. We need all our members to call in their friends and family to go on line (**after** voting opens on 26th September) at <http://community.force.natwest.com>, register and vote for us. At the time this is sent out we don't know the details of how the voting will work so we can't give more specific instructions, but it should be self-evident from the website or there is a helpline, 0800 2100 246 and a Minicom number 0800 0155 545. If Lewisham Pensioners Forum can get enough support to be one of the three projects in the Lewisham region given this award it will ensure that we can continue producing this bi-monthly newsletter for you for another year. The main way to vote is through the website so if you are not yet 'on-line' yourself perhaps you have friends, family and neighbours who are and who can vote on our behalf (it doesn't matter where they live).

If all our thousand and more members can just get one or two others to support the effort, that is an overwhelming vote in the Forum's favour. Over to you!

TEA DANCE TRIUMPH

Our first fundraising event—the Tea Dance at the end of June—was successful on all fronts.

The event raised over £250 for the Forum and, more importantly, everyone had a splendid time.

Many thanks to all who attended, all the volunteers who helped and to the Montage Theatre Group who started us off in style.

We will certainly be considering something similar in the future, or maybe link it with a quiz—
watch this space.....

Housing Campaign Group

The group will be meeting again on Monday 31st October 2011
3.00pm at The Saville Centre

Agenda items include:-

Opposing the removal of wardens from sheltered schemes—taking the campaign forward.

No need to book if you want to attend this group—

Everyone is welcome

Lewisham SOS NHS
with LPF



SAVE OUR NHS!

Lewisham Pensioners' Forum
"JUSTICE FOR PENSIONERS"

Thursday 20 October at 7.30pm
The Civic Suite, Catford

Informed speakers on the current debate as the Bill returns to Parliament.

Details to be confirmed nearer the time.

To help leaflet for the meeting—or if you would like to go on **the Forum's "Save our NHS" group mailing list** get in touch on 020 8690 7869 or e-mail: lpforum@btconnect.com

And **Lewisham SOS NHS** is on 020 8694 0121 or e-mail: jos@soslewisham.co.uk

Public Meeting — All Welcome

Downsizing or just having a clear-out?



Joy, a long-term supporter of the Forum, is moving from her family home to a smaller house and will not have room for all the books

she and her partner have amassed over the years. So with our **Big Book Sale Fundraiser** coming up on Sunday, 9th October, Joy very kindly donated a great number to the Forum.

If you are in a similar position—or just want to clear a little space on your shelves for new purchases—give the office a ring (020 8690 7869).

We will collect any amount—from two or three paperbacks to a box of encyclopaedias.

Your support will help us continue to provide a voice for older people in Lewisham through our campaign work and staging of events.

Diary Dates...

Saturday 10th September: "Golden Oldies" event in Deptford Park, Evelyn St. SE8 12noon-5pm

Wednesday 14th September: Pensioners' Day promotion in Deptford Market (and ticket sales in DAGE and the Ackroyd)

Wednesday 21st September: Pensioners' Day! See enclosed flyer and/or posters for details. Phone the office by 14th Sept. for help with transport.

Monday 19th September and Fridays 7th, 21st and 28th October: Information stall in the Riverdale Centre 10am to 12noon (anyone welcome to call by for a chat and to see what's new)

Tuesday 4th October: Pensioners Action Group meeting in the Civic Suite at 1.30pm

Sunday 9th October; Forum fundraising mega book sale (see page 3)

Wednesday 19th October: Joint NPC/Forum Minority Elders' Conference (see below)

Thursday 20th October: NHS Public Meeting in the Civic Suite at 7pm (see page 3)

Monday 31st October: Housing Campaign Group meeting (see page 3)

Tuesday 8th November: Mail run morning—do phone the office if you would like to help out.

Wednesday 23rd November: Forum AGM

Notice of Forum AGM

**Wednesday 23rd November 2011
10.30-12.30**

Civic Suite, Catford, SE6 4RU

The speaker and more detailed agenda will be confirmed in the November newsletter, but our Constitution requires 21 clear days notice to be given to all members, which is not necessarily achieved in the November mail-out.

The AGM is also, of course, the time when the Management Committee for the following year is elected. This year, to save costs and paper, we are not sending out a nomination form with every single copy of this September newsletter but would inform all our members that they will be available in the Forum office, at Pensioners' Day, at the Minority Elders' Conference event and on the Friday stall in the Riverdale Centre. **And if you would like one sent to you all you have to do is telephone 020 8690 7869 and we will put one in the post.**

19th NPC Pensioners' Parliament in Blackpool



Delegates from Lewisham attended this event and their joint report is available from the office. Phone us to ask for a copy to be sent to you or look for it on our website.

www.lewishampensionersforum.org

**Lewisham Pensioners
Forum /NPC
Minority Elders' Conference**



**11am to 3pm Wednesday 19th October
The Civic Suite, Catford (registration from 10.30)**

**Speakers / Market Stalls
Information Stands
Caribbean Lunch and Entertainment**

Entrance by ticket only—£3.00

For more information phone the National Pensioners Convention 020 7383 0388
(Limited tickets available in the Forum Office and at Pensioners Day)

Memory Clinic—A New Service in Lewisham

MindCare
Dementia Support

Dementia Information and Support Service is a new service providing information and support to anyone in Lewisham.

It's run by experienced dementia provider, MindCare. Just get in touch with our team if you are concerned about dementia or memory problems.

Contact Sonya Foley on 020 3301 7770 or 07714 145 419. or come and see us at Pensioners Day where we will have an information stand

Working to provide an integrated Lewisham Memory Service in partnership with: NHS Lewisham, London Borough of Lewisham, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, Lewisham HealthCare NHS Trust & Carers Lewisham

Do you have an e-mail contact address? We are committed to the bi-monthly paper newsletter to go to all members by post. However some items crop up between mailings that our members might be interested in and if we have an e-mail we can let you know about them.