

the pensioner

The magazine for and by the older people of Brighton & Hove

issue 46
winter 2013

new & improved!



THE PENSIONER LIVES ON!

In the last issue of *The Pensioner*, published in July, we reported that Pensioner Action, the organisation which had been producing it, sadly closed on 30 June 2013 and that the future of our magazine was uncertain. Many thought that issue might be the last – or the last for a long time. But here we are! Age UK Brighton & Hove has taken us under its wing and is kindly giving support-in-kind. (See the letter from Jess Sumner, its Chief Executive Officer, on page 2.) But it does not have the funds for any more than that. So this issue has been pulled together entirely by volunteer effort and the costs of design and printing have been found through advertising income and some individual donations. We are, of course, very grateful to our advertisers and to these individuals. Please support our advertisers, quote *The Pensioner* when you do so – and see if you can make use of the discounts some of them are offering to *Pensioner* readers. (See page 2 for our new “reader offers”.)

We hope to be able to struggle on and publish future issues, because we know *The Pensioner* is valued (see the article on page 4 with the feedback from the questionnaire in the last issue) and we have a clear vision for what it should be achieving (for example, see the article called “*The Pensioner* plans to go digital” on page 5). But these are hard times, our future is precarious and (be warned!) throughout this issue we will be asking for your help! We will also, throughout this issue, be stressing ways you can get involved in what’s going on in the City.

Lastly, Christmas - and winter – are coming! We are running a couple of articles on that theme and want to send you all our very best wishes for the season and for 2014. We very much hope you’ll be hearing from us again with a March issue.

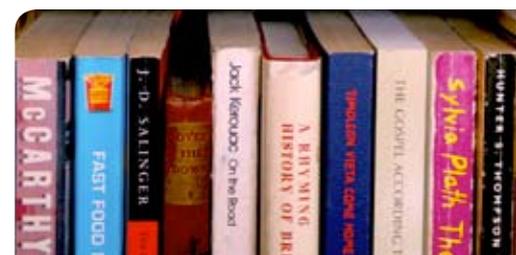
In the meantime, do please get in touch with us (via the contact point Age UK Brighton & Hove is providing - see page 2) with letters to the Editorial Team, or any suggestions for articles, thoughts, views or offers of help.



age friendly city -
where are we now?



reader offers and
the latest city news



join the university
of the third age



volunteers needed
- can you help?

Age UK Brighton & Hove and *The Pensioner* join forces

A statement from Jessica Sumner, Chief Executive Officer of Age UK Brighton & Hove

When the funding for *The Pensioner* ceased, we, at Age UK Brighton & Hove, felt we should not stand by and let this happen. We felt a magazine which was produced for and by older people was important to retain in Brighton & Hove.

As a result our Board has agreed to support *The Pensioner* for a year to see if new funding can be found to keep it going.

What does that mean?

Although we are supporting *The Pensioner* we do not wish it to become an 'Age UK Brighton & Hove' publication. We think the strength of *The Pensioner* is in reflecting the independent views of its readership. We do not have funds to support the magazine itself but are contributing in-kind support by providing the contact point for the magazine (see next column) and by offering administrative and volunteering support to the Editorial team.

The Pensioner still needs your help in many ways, including seeking funding and creating content for each edition, so if you are interested in being involved please get in touch using the following details:

ADDRESS: *THE PENSIONER*, c/o Age UK Brighton & Hove, 29-31 Prestonville Road, Brighton, BN1 3TJ.
Tel: 01273 720 603 (please mention *The Pensioner* so our volunteers understand what your enquiry is about). **EMAIL:** thepensioner@ageuk-bh.org.uk

To get a free emailed copy of *The Pensioner*, email: thepensioner@ageuk-bh.org.uk, asking to be added to the list. Unfortunately *The Pensioner* is unable at present to offer postal subscriptions, but hopes to update you on distribution in the next issue.



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NEW: reader offers

Each issue, the team at *The Pensioner* will be aiming to bring you some great discounts to help save you some money. This issue we've been kindly offered the following discounts by two respected local businesses...

Pinocchio's Restaurant: Print this page and their ad from page 13 and take with you to save 10% on your bill from Sunday to Thursday during November 2013 and January 2014 (December excluded). Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Fitzhugh Gates: Mention "*The Pensioner*" to save 5% on their Lasting Power of Attorney fees from November 2013 - end Feb 2014. See their ad opposite on page 3.

BRIGHTON & HOVE OLDER PEOPLE'S DAY 2013

How was it for you?

Many of you will remember the Older People's Days that were held in Hove Town Hall. They were very ambitious events. Typically, over 1,000 older people attended. The lower Hall was occupied by over 50 stalls provided by a wide range of organisations, whilst upstairs was a programme of musical and other events. But, over time, the resources required were simply not available. The last one was in 2009 and Older People's Day then became incorporated into the Council's People's Day (for all ages). Many older people continued to agitate for the re-instatement of Older People's Day, whilst others argued that such a huge, central City event was unlikely to find political favour in these hard times.

But, in 2013, we did indeed have an Older People's Day in Brighton & Hove— although in a very different format. Tuesday, 1 October this year was the International Older People's day of celebration, driven by the UN. Here in Brighton & Hove, the Council's Public Health team funded a number of events to celebrate the day, managed by local charity Impact Initiatives. The events were held across the City and included Singing for Better Health, who held a choir in Pavilion Gardens, the LUSH ukulele band who went to join the Brunswick Older People's Project at St John's Centre, Hove and 15 other events across the City, culminating in an Older People's Awards ceremony in the afternoon at The Grand Hotel Brighton. Awards given out included those to volunteers, carers, health and well-being initiatives and contributions to education and the community.

We know that many who attended the awards event thoroughly enjoyed themselves and we are absolutely delighted that so many older people received well-deserved recognition for their incredible achievements. On the other hand, some of the events away from the City Centre were not well-attended, or, if they were, they were attended by people who would have been at that location anyway! And some representatives of organisations have said it was a shame that they were not given more warning of the event so that they could contribute more. Lessons, then, for next year!

And that's where we need your views!



The Sing for Better Health group at Older People's Day (see ad on p11).

Did you know about the Day? Did you take part in any of the events? What did you think of it all? Do you think an Older People's Day is a good idea? If so, what form should it take? Let us know at our contact point at Age UK Brighton & Hove (see page 2) and help contribute to future developments!

Peace of mind with a Lasting Power of Attorney

A Lasting Power of Attorney allows someone to make decisions on your behalf, should there come a time when you lack the capacity to do so yourself.

It should reflect your wishes and needs, so that you'll have peace of mind knowing you've taken care of the things that matter most to you.

For advice regarding Powers of Attorney, Wills and any other matters regarding administration of an estate, please contact one of our friendly and professional private client team.

Mention this advert for a 5% discount on our LPA fees.

Contact: Carole Rowe - Tel: 01273 666 324 / email caroler@fitzhugh.co.uk or Chris Thomas - Tel: 01273 666 323 / email christ@fitzhugh.co.uk

3 Pavilion Parade,
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Sussex, BN2 1RY

fitzhugh gates
solicitors and notary

OUR QUESTIONNAIRE

by Peter Lloyd

When it appeared likely that Pensioner Action would lose its funding, we realised that to continue to publish *The Pensioner* magazine we would need to demonstrate its impact on its readers. We therefore devised the questionnaire which was included in our last issue – Summer 2013, No.45.

By the end of September, 90 completed questionnaires had been received. Their analysis provides the following data.

Our respondents: Nearly one half (49%) were over 80 years old; a further 29% were aged 70-79 years and 17% were aged 60-69 years. The few respondents under 60 appeared to be people who organised activities for older people. 70% of our respondents were women, 30% men, reflecting the gender difference in older age groups. 80% said they were fairly active, 20% less active.

59% said that they lived alone, 25% with family (partner or children) and 16% in sheltered housing or care homes.

Thus the majority of our respondents were quite old, living alone but still active.

Appreciation: 88% of the respondents said that they definitely enjoyed reading *The Pensioner* and 93% said that it was good to have a magazine for older people. 92% said that they read most of each issue. Almost two-thirds (64%) said that it contained much information that they could not get elsewhere, 36% some information.

We had suspected that older readers might experience difficulties with layout, print size or style, but almost all respondents were positive about the appearance of the magazine.

Most respondents were positive about the content items listed.

Personal Comments: The following are just a few of the many personal comments that were made:

- "As I am incapacitated, it keeps me in touch with information that is interesting and informative that concerns us old-timers."
- "It gives me the confidence that there are people out there battling on our behalf."
- "I feel much more confident and involved."
- "It makes me think what improvements I could make in my own life - seeing how active and interesting others are."

To sum up the personal comments, *The Pensioner* gave our readers a sense of 'belonging'; it provided information

Would you like to help with future issues of *The Pensioner*? Can you bring your skills to move it forward? Let us know by email: thepensioner@ageuk-bh.org.uk or see page 2 for postal address and contact number.

about services and events; they no longer felt excluded or 'forgotten'. The problems of ageing are inevitable – but it is comforting to know that others share them too and that there are 'people out there' willing to help.

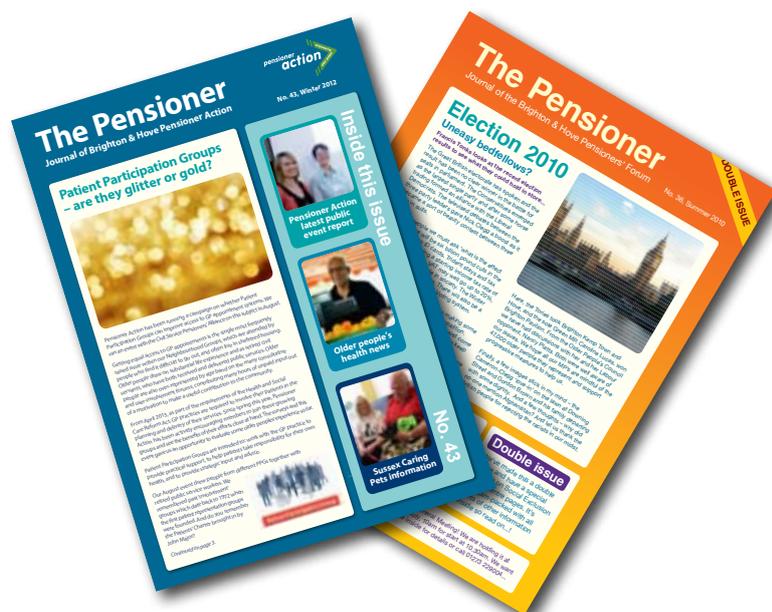
Finally: We asked our respondents to say whether they wanted *The Pensioner* to continue publication. Over two-thirds (67%) replied "Definitely", a quarter "Yes". Only three people replied "Perhaps" – one older woman and two much younger women. Just one respondent – a man in his 80's – was completely negative.

The Pensioner expresses its thanks to all those who completed the questionnaire, and its gratitude to the many who put their own stamp on the form.

Nearly two-thirds of the respondents asked to be kept informed of future developments; these will be added to our mailing lists. We will be getting in touch with those who volunteered to help with future publication.

Conclusions: We were surprised, frankly, to find that so many of our respondents fell into the oldest age category, lived alone and considered themselves 'less active'. These are people who are so often described as 'isolated', 'socially excluded', 'vulnerable' and 'hard to reach'. It does appear that *The Pensioner* does reach them and provides valuable support.

Some of our readers may live alone – but they no longer feel alone!



READER OFFERS! Have you checked out our new special reader offers on page 2?

CAN THE PENSIONER GO DIGITAL?

Don't worry! We are not abandoning our printed magazine – quite the reverse. But *The Pensioner* does not have a website. If we want to survive, grow and remain independent (and we do!), we will need one. We have produced plans for a site that would support the magazine - for example, current and back copies would be available online, as would more information about, and longer versions of, articles printed in the magazine. It would also have an information section containing links to services for older people (care, health, housing, etc.) and to older people's organisations. Another section would be a "What's on" calendar-style listing of local events of particular interest to older people. Our plans include investigation of how far it might be feasible for users of the site to interact with each other.

We have submitted an application to a Trust for this work. Even if we are successful and awarded a grant, it will not cover all aspects and we will need volunteers to help. We would especially like to hear from you if you have specialist skills such as inputting and updating website content. If you do not have such skills but want to help us with the website, there will be plenty of jobs such as:



- Finding out about events that may be of interest e.g. upcoming older people's meetings and contact names and numbers.
- Promoting the website (e.g. distributing posters and writing to the press) and spreading the word in general.
- Securing email details of local organisations that might want to receive a monthly or weekly email bulletin to print and display.

COULD YOU HELP US?? If so, get in touch (see page 2 for contact details).

FABRICA

Fabrica is a visual arts organisation based in a Grade 2-listed former Regency church in the heart of Brighton.

Fabrica offers a great programme of events for everyone and is committed to working with wider audiences, including older audiences.

Exhibitions are free and workshops are either free or low-cost. The building is fully accessible with disabled WC's.



ART - Fabrica has three exhibitions a year, each accompanied with a full programme of events.

MAKE - A wide variety of events and workshops are held throughout the year. Come and try something new, develop your skills or get involved in a discussion. Fabrica has something for everyone.

CHAT - Staff, volunteers and artists are committed to providing all our visitors with a warm and friendly welcome. Bring your friends and make new ones at Fabrica.

For more information on what Fabrica offer for older visitors and community/social groups contact Clare Hankinson, on 01273 778646 or email clare.hankinson@fabrica.org.uk.

FABRICA

40 Duke Street, Brighton
East Sussex BN1 1AG

Telephone: 01273 778646
Email: office@fabrica.org.uk



OLDER PEOPLE'S COUNCIL NEWS

by Mike Bojczuk, OPC Chair

I have been taking it easy since my London to Brighton 100km walk in May, but as the spirit of Active Ageing is ingrained deep, I couldn't resist climbing over the O2 and going to the top of the new Shard skyscraper in London - just to keep those legs in trim! There's no need for going overboard with this - sea swim on New Year's day?! NO!! All that is needed is a few minutes stroll every day. Little steps every day avoid the need for big pains later on! End of sermon!!

Since the last issue, there have been changes at the OPC, with Jack Hazelgrove stepping down and with myself elected to be Chair. He has served the older community very well in recent years and we owe him a big "thank you" for how he has steered the OPC. I hope I can do as well in the coming years.

You can see some of the work that Jack has presided over in the latest copy of our Annual Report - available at all good libraries and on our website:
http://olderpeoplescouncil.org/docs/annual_reports/opc_annual_report2012-13.pdf

When one works in teams and on committees, the thought of making radical changes if in charge always crops up, but with power comes responsibility, and this cannot be swept aside. I come to the stewardship of the OPC with two years left to the next elections. We are in the middle of a recession that looks set to continue. This leads to fiercer competition between community groups and charities for ever dwindling resources - the demise of Pensioner Action being one sad example. It means that ideas I may have had may no longer be plausible, as the Council support we have always taken for granted may also be reduced.

The many things that could happen mean that the OPC cannot just keep on as we are. We have to look ahead, and adapt to accommodate the changes that will arrive to challenge us. This also holds for our own lives as we grow older.

I want to see the OPC concentrate on three fronts: scrutiny of Council plans and decisions; closer links to the wider community groups; and campaigning on issues relevant to us older folk of Brighton & Hove.

- We will use our links to the Council to monitor forthcoming decisions that may affect older people, and we must have our voice heard at the meetings where these decisions are made.



Mike (with window-cleaner!) at the top of The Shard, the tallest building in the European Union - a suitably high position for the man who has just become Chair of Brighton & Hove's Older People's Council.

- There are many community groups across the city that represent older people and I think we should have links to them so we can better represent the older age group.
- We successfully campaigned to join the WHO Age Friendly City network, and also to reinstate Older People's Day. There are other local issues we cannot abandon so I would want to see if we can bring about change this way.

Our workplan will be looking at areas such as transport, housing and health that form the core Age-Friendly criteria. We must create the foundation to make sure this initiative continues through to the next generation of the OPC.

Finally, let's become more visible! Go to the shops, parks and events - as the more we are noticed the more consideration we will get!

For more info on the OPC, visit the website:
www.olderpeoplescouncil.org
 tel: 01273 296 427 / email:
olderpeoplescouncil@brighton-hove.gov.uk

THE PENSIONER NEEDS YOU!

Can you help us to continue publishing *The Pensioner* by raising important funds to keep it going? We need volunteers to help us find advertisers and sponsors - please see back page for more details.

AGE UK BRIGHTON & HOVE NEWS



Has your washing machine broken down, but you can't afford to fix it? Has your fridge stopped working, but you don't have enough money to buy a new one? Maybe you need a new bed?

If you are over 55 and need a helping hand to replace worn out white goods and furniture, then get in touch with Age UK Brighton & Hove on 01273 720 603. Thanks to the Dodgson Foundation, we are able to allocate one-off funds to pay for new or good quality second hand items such as beds, chairs, cookers, washing machines, tumble driers, dish washers, fridges and freezers.

Contact our Information & Advice team to find out whether you are eligible for help. Our volunteer advisers can also help you with a wide range of issues including welfare benefits, housing options, wills and probate, adaptations and equipment to help you stay independent, care services and bereavement. Later in the year we will be hosting a workshop by the Citizens Advice Bureau on managing your finances, including how to avoid scams. Call us on 01273 720 603 for further details.



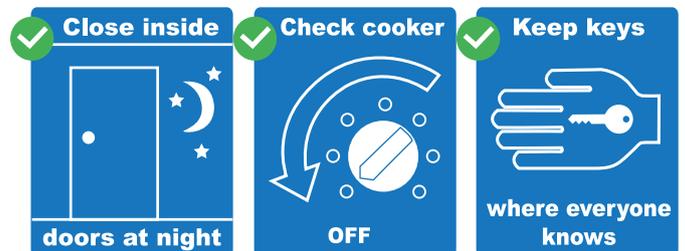
WANT TO WRITE TO THE PENSIONER?

Please send in your letters and opinions - see p2 for address. Unfortunately we cannot promise to publish them all and may edit them.

MAKE A BEDTIME CHECK

You are more at risk from a fire when asleep.

So it's a good idea to check your home before you go to bed.



- ✓ Turn off and unplug electrical appliances unless they are designed to be left on.
- ✓ Don't leave the washing machine on.
- ✓ Turn heaters off and put up fireguards.
- ✓ Put candles and cigarettes out properly.
- ✓ Make sure exits are kept clear.

For free fire safety advice and where necessary provide and fit free smoke alarms:

Tel: 0800 177 7069

Email: homefire.safetyvisits@esfrs.org

Website: www.esfrs.org





AGE FRIENDLY CITY – where are we now?

Two different (but co-operating) groups are involved in the Age Friendly City initiative. The Steering Group determines the over-all direction of the programme, whilst the Focus Group gathers the views of older people and feeds them to the Steering Group. Here is news from both of them:

Age Friendly City Steering Group

The Age Friendly City Steering Group consists of representatives from the Local Authority, Public Health, and local voluntary sector agencies who work with older people. It also includes a representative of the Age Friendly City Focus Group (see below for more information). In order to help decision makers and planners focus their minds on which aspects of 'Age Friendly' apply to them, we decided to choose particular areas of the Age Friendly City programme and set up specific events based around those. Transport is one we felt would be of key importance in ensuring older people can access the city and what it has to offer. As such, a workshop with the Transport Partnership and other relevant organisations is currently being organised. The aim of these discussions is to come up with proactive suggestions about what can be altered to make transport in the City better meet the needs of older people. If you want to join in the debate, read on...!

Age Friendly City Focus Group

(news provided by Penny Morley, Secretary, Older People's Council)

During the first half of this year, Pensioner Action ran an Age Friendly City Focus Group bringing together older people from across the City who wanted to make positive changes in the City. Discussions were wide-ranging, seeking to understand why people live in Brighton & Hove, whether they planned to stay, and the sort of support and services needed to make a good quality of life in older age. Meetings covered design issues, i.e. what type of housing and where in the City do older people want to live, with many preferring to live in the centre and not be pushed out to the edge where services are less accessible. The views and needs of Older People must be at the heart of the Age Friendly City initiative so that the Council can really hear their voices and make changes to the way the City is run to meet those needs.

Keep in touch or get involved!

The focus group is set to continue, with Age UK Brighton & Hove hosting regular monthly meetings. The next meeting is discussing transport (see item in the first column from the Age Friendly City Steering Group) where issues about pedestrian needs are bound to be to the forefront. If you are interested in participating, or just keeping in touch with what is going on, contact Jackie Duncan at Age UK Brighton & Hove on 01273 720 603 ext.227 or email: jackied@ageuk-bh.org.uk

HEALTHWATCH NEWS

Healthwatch is a new organisation which aims to give everyone in the City a strong voice to influence and challenge the way health and social care services are being provided across the City. Here at *The Pensioner*, we were pleased to hear that a number of new members of staff have been appointed, including Jane Viner, who is filling the post of Healthwatch Manager on maternity cover.

Most of all, we were delighted to learn that Fran McCabe has been appointed as the Healthwatch Independent Chair. Fran has many years' experience of working in health and social care, both locally and nationally, much of

this experience involving work with older people. In fact, Fran was Chair of the Board of Age UK until October 2013, when she stood down to take on the Healthwatch role. We hope to feature an interview with her in the March issue of *The Pensioner* and will be asking her, in particular, about Healthwatch and older people.

To find out more call 01273 810 236 or see their website at: <http://www.healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk/>

Healthwatch

SPREAD THE WARMTH

Spread the Warmth is an Age UK campaign to stop older people suffering and dying needlessly in winter.

The facts:

- Every year, more than 26,000 people die needlessly during winter because of the cold weather.
- Older people are more vulnerable to effects of cold weather - out of the 26,000 winter deaths every year, 9 in 10 are older people.
- Over a third of people in the UK aged 65+ say they are dreading the cold weather in winter.

Why is cold weather an issue for older people?

- As we get older, our bodies respond differently to the cold – increasing the likelihood of a heart attack, stroke, or pneumonia.
- Cold weather also makes it more difficult for people to get around – which can lead to depression, loneliness, and isolation. Over 500,000 older people spend Christmas Day alone.

- Cold weather adds to the financial worries of older people - 36% of people aged 60 or over in Great Britain stay or live in just one heated room of their home to save money. 30% say they avoid heating rooms like the bedroom, bathroom or living room because they are worried about the cost.

During Spread the Warmth, Age UK in Brighton & Hove will:

- Distribute essential items like clothes, heaters and blankets to keep people warm.
- Provide benefit checks to ease financial worries.
- Distribute information guides with thermometers, including tips on how to stay warm in your home
- Distribute Christmas hampers and assist people in joining in Christmas celebrations.

Help us: Donations are a crucial part in making this support a reality – it is through your generosity that Age UK Brighton & Hove are able to provide these services.

To make a donation, contact Age UK Brighton and Hove at 29-31 Prestonville Rd, Brighton, BN1 3TJ. Tel: 01273 720 603. Email: info@ageuk-bh.org.uk



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Clearwell Mobility is the leading supplier of mobility and homecare equipment in Sussex with showrooms throughout the area.

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Making life easier



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01273 424224
 61 Boundary Road
 Hove, BN3 5TD
 OPPOSITE TESCO
 OPEN MON-SAT 9-5PM

BURGESS HILL SHOWROOM
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SADNESS AT CHRISTMAS

by a local retired GP

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Charles Dickens was referring to The French Revolution but this phrase also describes some people's experience of the Christmas holiday! If you are fortunate enough to spend Christmas surrounded by friends and family, being bombarded by gifts and delicious food, this could be the high spot of your year. That said, this is, as you may have experienced, a notoriously popular time for the eruption of family feuds. If you are alone, and this is not of your choosing, the holiday may be a thoroughly lonely and miserable period for you, although a small number of people claim to prefer being on their own. What I think is generally accepted is that this is a time of emotional extremes and far too many people find Christmas a time of great sadness.

Sadness always seems to be the result of human loss. Children leave home and may then have very little contact with their parents and, albeit rarely, reject them completely. Marriages break down, lovers part, friendships lapse, promises are broken and central figures in the cast of one's life die. We will all have experienced the unhappiness caused by at least one of these adversities, but some people appear unable to emerge from the grip of sadness. Although, unlike clinical depression which in many ways it mimics, this is not considered to be a medical condition, it does consume a lot of a GP's time. It erodes self esteem, robs you of energy and optimism and makes you feel less sociable at a time when you would benefit from more company, not less. The release from sadness requires the restoration of human contact, especially with people with whom you feel comfortable and secure when discussing your feelings - and our generation, in this country, is not good at doing this.

When I was in General Practice I kept, on my woefully untidy desk, a short list of sad patients whom I would occasionally phone for a chat. The expressions of gratitude for these brief contacts were out of all proportion to the effort on my part and I am ashamed that I failed to do it on a wider scale. Showing interest in, and concern for, other people is a sign of our own maturity and humanity. It is such a great source of comfort for those on the receiving end of this contact that we should all try to give more of what we would like to receive. One impediment is that we are instinctively cautious about encouraging contact which might be seen as intrusive, but that should not inhibit us from surprising a sad neighbour by starting a conversation, phoning a friend who has a problem or contacting a

bereaved acquaintance after that immediate period when everyone expressed sympathy. You will both feel better. Happy Christmas.

Very relevant to this article is the following information about the Call in Time scheme run by Age UK:

CALL IN TIME

There are two elements to Call in Time. Firstly, it can provide a telephone friendship service which connects you with a volunteer in order to establish a mutual ongoing friendship and social call; this generally occurs on a weekly basis for up to 30 minutes. Secondly, it can provide a shorter call (Good Day) made by Call in Time staff to check if you are OK. These calls are available to you for up to eight weeks, e.g. after returning from hospital.

All calls are made between 9am and 5pm, Monday-Friday.

If you, or someone you know, meet four key criteria:

- is aged 60+, living on their own or is a carer for someone else
- feels lonely and isolated
- has little or no local support from family, friends or neighbours
- is comfortable having conversations on the phone

then simply contact Age UK on 0844 225 0320 (typically local rate at 2p per minute from BT landlines).

Our office hours for this service are 9am-5pm (outside of these hours, please leave a message with your name and telephone number). Please note that this service is suitable for most older people, but is unable to work with clients who have complex needs, hearing impairment, dementia, mental health problem or those in crisis.

For times of crisis, Age UK Brighton & Hove provides the following service:

CRISIS is a free short term emergency service for people aged over 60, living in Brighton & Hove. The Crisis service operates from 8.00am to 6.00pm daily (no evening or night time calls) 365 days a year. It is normally available for a maximum of 7 days only.

Crisis can help with problems such as:

- shopping for essential items
- quick/light meal preparation
- light household tasks
- support with personal care and showering
- posting mail and collecting prescriptions
- domestic emergencies
- 'comfort' calls after an emergency or bereavement
- sudden illness, an accident, or hospital discharge

For more information on what we can offer, call: 01273 328 555.



ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

During the past year, hospital accident and emergency services have repeatedly been in the headlines with stories abounding of both good and bad experiences. The problem is a national one, but our own A&E at the Royal Sussex County Hospital (RSCH) has been singled out by the local media for its poor performance.

Both the RSCH and the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), which is responsible for deciding what health services should be available in the City, are addressing the problem, having received £2.3 million government funding for this. The hospital has restructured some of its admissions and treatment procedures. In order to stop Brighton's A&E department from being overwhelmed over the winter, the CCG is launching and publicising services which people

can use instead. Its campaign uses local people to promote the NHS 111 phone-line (use this when you need medical help fast but the problem is not life-threatening) and GP and out-of-hours services, as well as the Brighton Station walk-in centre (right next to Brighton Station at Aspect House, 84-87 Queen's Road), which treats minor injuries and ailments and is open from 8am-8pm. The CCG also asks us to remember that the City's pharmacists, some of whom are open late, can offer advice and over-the-counter medication for a whole range of problems.

A new website, which includes videos, a game and information can be found at: www.wecouldbeheroes.nhs.uk

The basic message from the CCG is:

- **Whilst you are well, consider the options available to you**
- **During your GP surgery opening hours, phone it for help and advice; when it is closed phone 111 to obtain out-of-hours service**
- **If you feel really ill, and especially if you suspect a heart attack or a stroke, phone 999 for an ambulance at once.**

In our March issue, we hope to look at urgent care from a number of perspectives and review how the system has been working. We hope, of course, that none of our readers will need urgent care over the winter, but, if you are unfortunate enough to do so, please let us know how you got on when accessing these services. (See page 2 for details of our contact point at Age UK Brighton & Hove.)

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For people 55+



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GROUP INFORMATION:

Mondays: 1.45pm to 3.15pm, Patching Lodge, Eastern Rd, Brighton BN2 0DE (next to Bingo Hall, corner of Freshfield Road),

Tuesdays: 1pm to 2.30pm, St. Richards, Egmont Road, Hangleton

Fridays: 11.30am to 1pm, Elizabeth Court, 65 Wilbury Rd, Hove (corner of Cromwell Rd).

Saturdays: 2pm to 3:30pm, Brunswick Surgery, 18-19 Western Rd, Hove (corner of Upper Market St)

Groups meet weekly and are for anyone 55+ with or without a long term health condition. All venues have disabled access. Admission: £3.

For more information, call Udita: 01273 556 755.

For people 55+ or anyone with a long-term health problem e.g. Asthma, lung disease, Parkinson's, depression, cancer, stroke.

HOUSING IN LATER YEARS

by Peter Lloyd

Almost inevitably, in one's later years, housing will become an issue; house and garden become too big to manage; steps, stairs and high cupboards all provide hazards. With the death of a partner we not only lose a companion but one whose skills complement one's own. Living alone is not simply a question of social isolation.

So what are our options? Sadly we cannot predict how ageing or poor health will affect us. It is essential that we explore the many solutions that could meet our needs.

Many, perhaps most, of us would prefer to remain in our home for as long as possible; there are a number of options:-

- We could install adaptations: a shower instead of a bath, grab rails or a better bannister rail, a ramp. An occupational therapist can advise.
- We could seek outside help for personal care or domestic chores. Those with savings below £23,500 and in substantial need are eligible for public funding; for others there are private care agencies and many voluntary agencies.
- If one had a spare bedroom, one might "home share". We are accustomed to having an au-pair to help with our children; why not an au-pair for older people? Organisations exist which produce a register of seekers and sharers; couples are matched and introduced, references are taken, help is given to draw up a contract – who is to do what, who pays (several hours of help balances the rent); the arrangement is continually monitored.

The alternative is to move to a more convenient property:-

- In the past most older people moved into their children's home; today we all expect more independence. And few children can provide a "granny flat".
- We could downsize to a smaller property; but moving can be a traumatic experience; and bungalows are often far from shops, public transport and services.
- We could move into sheltered housing – Brighton & Hove have over 70 schemes, housing 3000 people; roughly 1/3 are rental city council properties, 1/3 are managed by housing associations and 1/3 are leasehold to buy). Here one has one's own flat, but has the companionship of residents and support from a scheme manager. Two are extra-care schemes – New Larchwood in Coldean and Patching Lodge in Eastern Road – which provide a midday meal and an in-house care team.
- Finally there are residential care and nursing homes which provide more support; many are small with

but a handful of residents; others are large with up to a hundred residents. The latter can provide more services, but less intimacy.

One can outline existing options; but the big question is – do our towns and cities provide enough housing appropriate to the needs of the older people?

The think-tank Demos has recently published a report, The Top of the Ladder, which argues for the greater provision of "retirement homes" (defined as "accommodation where older people have their own dwellings and front door, but share communal areas such as lounges and restaurants with facilities on hand to provide round the clock support"). Current government policy, it claims, focuses on providing more bungalows - far from services. (See our item on the Age Friendly City focus group on page 8, which suggests that older people in this City do not want this option.) Demos believes that millions of older people would be happy to move into a retirement home; in so doing they could release over 3 million properties which would help the younger generation to get a foot on the housing ladder.

Demos, with housing associations, is mounting a project, led by Esther Rantzen, to promote such a policy.

To find out more:

- **For advice about care, support or adaptations, telephone City Council's Adult Social Care helpline on 01273 295 555. Age UK Brighton & Hove, tel: 01273 720 603, has access to much information.**
- **For the local BHCC Care Link Plus Community Alarm Telecare Services who supply pendant alarms and other warning devices, call 01273 673 105.**
- **BHCC Older People's Housing Department can provide information about sheltered housing; tel: 01273 293 255.**
- **Homeshare: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/homeshare for a do-it-yourself kit; or visit www.draycotthomeshare.co.uk**
- **Elderly Accommodation Council maintains a detailed register of sheltered housing and retirement homes throughout the country and can provide local directories; this will come with a 14 page personal housing options report which amplifies many of the issues raised in the above article. Telephone their advice line 0800 377 7070 or visit www.firststopadvice.org.uk**
- **For the Demos report: tel: 020 7367 6325 or visit their website: www.housinginlaterlife.co.uk**



UP THE LEVEL by Francis Tonks

The Level in the centre of Brighton has been revived, refurbished and renewed.

After months of work there are new play equipment, new gardens and a brand new skate park. I was last there on a late summer evening. The kids were having a glorious time. There was climbing, sliding and a whole variety of activities. In the skate park young fellows were hurling themselves around at great speed. Besides all the children's activities there will be a Healthwalk. There are two new pavilions, one is for the police and the other for community use. A History Group is in action. Chess is planned too.

There have been some delays. The café is not ready yet and the grand opening that was planned for September has been put off until next year.

I have attended the Communities of the Level Forum and am impressed by the enthusiasm of everyone involved.

One thing that does worry me is that the seating on the Rose Walk has gone. The Rose Walk is the footpath between Lewes Road and the Ditchling Road. I am told the situation is under review. A number of frail and elderly people from the Hanover area go across to the shops in London Road and are glad to sit down for a rest on their way home. I am glad we are looking after our children and grandchildren; but do not forget the old folk. Put back the seats. We need them.

If you agree with Francis about the need for seats on the Rose Walk, you should tell Claire Morgan, Activities Programme Officer, Hollingdean Depot, Upper Hollingdean Road, Brighton BN1 7GA (tel: 01273 290 425) and Councillor Pete West, Chair of the Environment Committee, King's House, Grand Avenue, Hove BN3 7LS (tel: 01273 296 431).

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GREY MATTERS PRODUCTIONS

activities/interests

by **Harry Steer MBE**

Grey Matters Productions continues to provide a local community station with a 55 minute radio programme, "At Home this Morning", made by, and for, older people. It is broadcast on RadioReverb (97.2VHF) at 8am on Sundays, 11am on Tuesdays, and 9am on Thursdays and can also be accessed at these times via the internet at www.radioreverb.com and clicking on "Click to listen online".

A new programme every fortnight is made in a special studio in Kempdown and broadcast six times

in those 14 days. The company was formed by the Older People's Council, The Pensioners' Forum (now extinct) and the local Age Concern (now Age UK Brighton & Hove). All the team are volunteers. Some funding towards the transmission costs, the use of the studio and business costs was obtained by a grant from the City Council.

If you have ideas for future programmes or want to get involved in production, then please get in touch with myself - Harry Steer - on 01273 419 723 or email: hrry371@aol.com



PURSUING A SPECIAL INTEREST

by **Jackie Fuller**

Chair of Brunswick Westward U3A

Joining the U3A (University of the Third Age) is a wonderful way of meeting people with similar interests or for exploring a new interest. Don't be put off by the name – U3As exist for all people no longer in full-time work who want to participate in shared learning for pleasure rather than for qualifications.

There are several U3As covering the Brighton & Hove area. In alphabetical order these are not only the one called Brighton & Hove, but also Brunswick Westward (covering West Hove, Hangleton and Portslade), Five Deans (covering Ovingdean, Rottingdean, Roedean, Saltdean and Woodingdean), Patcham, Preston Park, and Shoreham & Southwick.

In fact you can join any U3A that offers activities in the subjects or leisure pursuits that interest you. You don't have to live in that particular catchment area and some people belong to more than one U3A.

U3A members meet in small Special Interest Groups - anything from Gardens to Walking, Languages to Literature, Discussion Groups to Creative Writing, Art Appreciation to hands-on Drawing and Painting, Music Appreciation to Singing – the list is endless.

All the Special Interest Groups are coordinated by members themselves, so the subjects and activities vary from one U3A to another. Some U3As also organise regular Talks by interesting speakers and/or outings to theatres, concerts and other places.

For those with access to the internet, the best way to get further information is to go to the website of the Sussex U3A Network, which is at: www.sussexu3anetwork.org.uk. From there you can get information about each of our local U3As. Most of them hold an open day or afternoon during late summer which people can attend to find out more, but as it's too late for those now, here are some useful contact details:

- Brighton & Hove U3A – email: membership@brightonandhoveu3a.org
- Brunswick Westward U3A – for Secretary tel: 01273 747 565 or de@bartaby.co.uk; or for Membership Secretary: 01273 550 745 or email: cynthia.barnes@talktalk.net
- Five Deans U3A - tel: 01273 301 548
- Patcham U3A – tel: 01273 500 757
- Preston Park U3A – for Secretary tel: 01273 542 605 or dcotton@helicon.com; or for Membership Secretary: tel: 01273 705 111 or rogerluther@tinyworld.co.uk
- Shoreham & Southwick U3A – tel: 01903 455 701 or brian@theedens.org.uk

BOOK REVIEW

PRIDE OF OUR VALLEY

published by the Craven Vale
Community Association, 2013, 130pp

During our lifetimes, most of us live in a variety of neighbourhoods; but how much do we know of their history? Very little, I suspect. However, just as a sense of history is essential in creating a national identity so too local history, by creating a sense of belonging, facilitates community activity.

Pride of our Valley was written to celebrate the diamond jubilee of the Craven Vale Estate, built in 1953 by the Brighton Council, with 115 houses and 216 flats in three storey blocks. But the history is of the entire valley, originally known as Baker's Bottom, lying between Queen's Park and Whitehawk and running from Brighton Racecourse, southwards to Brighton College and Eastern Road.

The format of the book is attractive and original. It is arranged in four colour-coded sections each of 15 items; text is on the left hand page with appropriate photos on the right.

One section covers the long history of the valley, with its origin after the Ice Age when melting water cut a path through the chalk; traces of Neolithic settlement have been found at the upper end; whilst, in mediaeval times traditional strip farming was practised in the lower parts within the "furlongs" of Brighton Parish.

The second section covers the building development of the past two centuries. Brighton College was built in 1848 – the original building still stands. The railway had reached Brighton in the 1840s, but in the 1860s a branch line was constructed to Kemp Town; the 2 ¼ mile line formed a long arc, leaving the Lewes line near Round Hill before going south to Kemp Town Station, adjacent to Brighton College. The line was never heavily used by passengers – it was only a mile by road from Kemp Town Station to the centre of Brighton; but the site covered a vast goods yard used largely by coal merchants servicing the eastern areas. This was finally closed in 1971 and subsequently developed as the Freshfield Industrial Estate. In the 1880's the little roads to the north of the College – Canning, Hendon, Bute and Rochester streets – were built; and then little more happened until the 1950s.

The remaining two sections cover reminiscences of some of the earlier residents of the Craven Vale Estate, still living there. Their fascinating stories are



Looking over Craven Vale, one of the many images used in the book

then matched with accounts covering similar topics by today's young residents.

The book represents a vast effort, primarily by the Craven Vale residents led by Alan Cooke, but assisted by professional geologists, archeologists and archivists. Publication was facilitated by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, which enabled a free copy of the book to be provided for every household in the entire valley.

So, congratulations again to the Craven Vale Community Association (it now embraces the entire valley). May its efforts be emulated elsewhere – after all, nowhere lacks a history.

The book may be downloaded at www.cravenvale.org.uk. Other enquires to the Craven Vale Community Association, 17a Hadlow Close, Brighton, BN2 0FH.



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getting involved

UNIVERSAL BENEFITS FOR PENSIONERS – WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP KEEP THEM!

Politicians from all the three main parties have suggested at one time or another that the winter fuel allowance, free bus pass, TV licences for the over 75s and prescriptions for older people should either be means-tested or withdrawn altogether – not in this Parliament, but perhaps in the next.

The National Pensioners' Convention (NPC) argues that this represents an unfair attack on the benefits that older people have campaigned for over the years – partly in recognition of the inadequate level of the state pension - and has launched an online petition in support of universal pensioner benefits. The petition can be signed via the NPC website at www.npcuk.org - or you can get paper copies from the NPC office at Walkden House, 10 Melton Street, London NW1 2EJ. Tel: 0207 383 0388.

Over 21,500 have already signed the petition. It remains open for signatures until 10 May 2014 and will be considered for debate by the Backbench Business Committee should it pass the 100,000 signature threshold. So.....why not get involved?

sources of information

WISE GUIDES

Independent Age, a charity helping older people for 150 years, has recently published three guides which are probably among the very best of their type.

1. Advice for later life: Support and entitlements for over-65's.
2. Extra help at home: Essential advice for over-65's to live independently.
3. Healthy, happy, connected: Support and advice for older people living alone.

Each is a booklet of 85-100 pages, with large type and indexed. They are free and will be posted to you on request!

Write to: Freepost RLTT-ACRZ-LZZT, Independent Age, 6 Avonmore Road, London W14 8RL. Tel: 0207 605 4225 / email: comms@independentage.org / website: www.independentage.org

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You will, of course, need to be out-going, persuasive, persistent (not too pushy, though!), fairly computer-literate and possibly with some experience of this area of activity. Oh yes – and you'll need to be able to rub along with the rest of the team! In return, they will be happy to give you training and support.

Interested? Please get in touch with the contact point at Age UK Brighton & Hove (see page 2).

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