



# GREY MATTERS

## COUNTY-WIDE SENIORS' ASSOCIATION TO BE LAUNCHED THIS MONTH

The long-awaited county-wide association of seniors' forums, the East Sussex Seniors' Association (ESSA), will be launched on July 12th in Uckfield Civic Centre. As the seniors' forum for Wealden, WSCP has joined ESSA and has been very involved with helping to get it off the ground. Among the dignitaries expected to attend the launch are a Deputy Lieutenant of East Sussex and the Leader of East Sussex County Council.

All members of WSCP are invited to the launch - if you are a member\* there will be an invitation and draft programme enclosed with this newsletter, together with a reply slip and an envelope. Organisations and groups with an interest in older people are invited to the launch as well - please get in touch with Gemma Counsell on 01273 481160, or [gemma.counsell@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:gemma.counsell@eastsussex.gov.uk) for booking instructions. (\*NB membership is open to anyone living in Wealden who is over fifty, signs up at an event or returns a membership application form).

Like all its member forums ESSA is a non-political umbrella organisation. By bringing all the local seniors' forums in East Sussex together, ESSA aims to build on the local work of the forums and strengthen the voice of older people in the county.

## COME AND CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL OLDER PERSONS' DAY WITH US!

In recognition of the world's rapidly ageing population and the growing importance of older people in society, the United Nations has designated 1 October as the annual International Day of Older Persons.

Over the next 50 years, the number of older persons will nearly quadruple, growing from about 600 million to almost 2 billion senior citizens. Today, one in every ten is 60 years and older. By 2050, one out of every five will be an older person, and by 2150, one third of the people in the world are expected to be 60 years of age or older.

Older men and women will increasingly play a critical rôle in our fast ageing world - through volunteer work, transmitting experience and knowledge, helping their families with caring responsibilities and increasing their participation in the paid labour force.

World leaders met in Madrid in 2002 to discuss how the world should tackle poverty and development issues among older people. The delegates recognised the importance of age issues in the planning of all future global action plans to tackle poverty and other development problems. In line with the Madrid International Plan of Action, the World Health Organisation launched a document "Active Ageing - A Policy Framework", outlining its approaches and perspectives for healthy ageing throughout the life course. In addition, the group pledged to work towards halving old-age poverty by 2015, in line with the United Nations goals on poverty.

**WE'RE PLANNING TO HOLD OUR SECOND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 1ST 2007, TO MARK THIS YEAR'S INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS, AND WOULD LIKE TO INVITE EVERYONE IN WEALDEN OVER 50 TO TAKE PART. JOIN US FOR FREE REFRESHMENTS BEFORE AND AFTERWARDS: COME ALONG TO THE HEATHFIELD COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR SANDWICHES AT 1 PM, TAKE PART IN OUR A.G.M. AT 2 PM AND ROUND OFF THE DAY WITH TEA AND CAKES AT 4 PM (USE THE REPLY SLIP ON THE BACK PAGE TO LET US KNOW YOU ARE COMING)**

***DON'T JUST READ THIS NEWSLETTER AND DISPOSE OF IT - PASS IT ON! IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN ISSUES OF CONCERN TO OLDER PEOPLE WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU. PLEASE BECOME A MEMBER OF THE WEALDEN SENIOR CITIZENS' PARTNERSHIP BY CONTACTING LINDA GRAHAM, THE SECRETARY, OR ANY COMMITTEE MEMBER - SEE THE BACK PAGE. THERE IS NO NEED TO RE-APPLY IF YOU ALREADY RECEIVE A PERSONAL COPY OF THE NEWSLETTER.***

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE CONSULTATIONS

Members of the Partnership Management Committee meet regularly with the Director of Adult Social Care at East Sussex County Council and are able to raise with him a wide range of issues. We are pleased to report that we find that the authorities are listening in an unprecedented way when we ask them to look at policies affecting our members. We believe that the representation of Older People's Forums at these meetings contributes greatly to the consultation process. We would like to hear from you if your life is being affected by a health and social care issue, for example the closure of a day care centre, and will gladly bring it to the attention of the relevant authority and seek a response.



### DIRECT PAYMENT FOR CARERS AND FOR OLDER PEOPLE'S CARE

Many carers are now being helped by Direct Payment support services.

The UK relies on an army of millions of unpaid carers, who fill the gap between the NHS and ever more cash-strapped councils. But as the care need has grown, the tax and benefits system has been unable to provide sufficient support. Thousands of carers are unable to work, face financial pressures and mounting debt that increasingly lead to their own ill-health.

Direct Payment for Social Care gives you greater control over the way you live your life; it means that you can decide on how you receive your social care. Once your level of need has been established, you can take responsibility for managing your own money and can manage your own care.

Direct Payments is a way to give people with care needs and carers more independence, more choice of services and more control over their care.

East Sussex County Council is committed to increasing the number of users by 120% over the next three years. Nearly 300 people now benefit from Direct Payments. The council gives people cash to buy for themselves the care and support services which have been agreed.

People now have the opportunity to select from a number of options to help them use Direct Payments. These include:

- employing a Personal Assistant themselves (with help to do this)
- an Independent Living Trust – where a person needs special help to manage a Direct Payment and so a legal trust is established, and
- purchasing care directly from an independent provider.

Direct Payments allow people to have more choice, more flexibility and greater control because they can organise their care their way.

To find out more, contact A4e Independent Living Support Service on 01323 414674.

### PATIENT ADVICE AND LIAISON SERVICE



The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) was introduced to ensure that everyone using health services can receive confidential support, advice and information when they need it. PALS can help guide people through the system and help resolve concerns about care and treatment provided. PALS aims to give people a voice in their own care and in the way local health services are run by listening to patients' feedback.

Since its inception, PALS has been in contact with thousands of patients, carers and members of the public who have benefited from advice, information and support. PALS is there to ensure that people are guided through the system and to resolve concerns quickly.

If you use local health services and need support, information or advice, contact Liam Stephens on 01273 403560 or 01323 747724 for a confidential service that operates Monday to Friday.

### ARE YOU A CARER?

- Carers look after someone at home with an illness or disability.
- A carer may be a relative, friend or neighbour. They are not paid for the care they provide.
- The person cared for may live in their own home or the carer's home.



If you are a carer you are entitled to a Carers' Allowance, and Care for the Carers can help you with your assessment.

Care for the Carers is an independent charity that can inform carers about support and services available to them. Outreach workers can visit you at home to find out what you need.

To find out more, ring 01323 738390.



## TRANSPORT - A VITAL ISSUE IN WEALDEN

The inadequate public transport system in East Sussex is one of the areas where the Wealden Senior Citizens' Partnership has been keen to see an improvement ever since we were launched in 2005. One of the speakers at the launch of our forum was the Transport Strategy Manager at East Sussex County Council, who said it was vital that Older People's Forums should take every opportunity to influence decision-making by actively taking part in transport consultations. One such consultation took place at the end of April, and we were there, along with representatives of several of the other East Sussex Older People's Forums. These are some of the key issues which emerged.

### THE THORNY PROBLEM OF BUS SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS

Rural bus services cannot usually be made commercially viable because there are not enough people living on the routes. In rural areas the County Council chooses whether to provide a service or not by commissioning and subsidising services. The County Council has to constantly review its spending policy, but it is clear that any overall reduction in funding for passenger transport would seriously compromise current services.

The Government has recently introduced free bus travel for eligible residents and all residents over 60, and in April 2008, this scheme will extend to the whole of England, though not to the community transport sector or rail. Bus companies and the County Council consider that the funding they receive for this scheme is not enough to reimburse their costs. Buses are carrying significant numbers of "free" passengers so that people who pay for their tickets are sometimes unable to board. The scheme, as it is currently structured, is discouraging bus companies from investing more resources and promoting services. The bus companies suggest that all the income generated from parking should be fully invested in public transport. Using increased parking revenue for public transport would, in their view, help them to keep bus fares down.

### VOLUNTEER DRIVING SCHEMES

Many communities in rural areas have set up transport schemes using voluntary car drivers to help with taking people to medical and other related appointments, shopping etc. These schemes vary from area to area, but in Wealden schemes already operate in East Hoathly, Heathfield, Uckfield, Forest Row, Groombridge, Hartfield, Horam, Mayfield, Framfield, Wadhurst and Jarvis Brook. If a scheme does not exist where you live - why not contact your Parish Council or faith group and suggest that they set one up? There is plenty of advice and guidance available. If you feel there is a need in your town or village, contact Caroline Scotter of Action in Rural Sussex ([caroline.scotter@ruralsussex.org.uk](mailto:caroline.scotter@ruralsussex.org.uk) or 01273 473422), who has helped in the setting up of many such schemes.

### WHY PUBLIC TRANSPORT IS SO IMPORTANT TO ALL OF US

Most public transport services in rural areas cannot make a profit, but if the services can be kept going, supplemented by community transport schemes, there are enormous benefits:

- older people can live longer in their own homes by being able to access shops and services
- young people can go out in the evenings without using cars
- people can get to work with reduced rush hour congestion, and
- there are environmental benefits such as reduced carbon emissions.

Many rural areas have an ageing population and a key priority is to maintain the independence of people living at home for as long as possible. To achieve that requires an integration of social care and transport policies. It seems that in rural East Sussex the car has 'won the battle', but a bus service is essential for the maintenance of a rural life for the elderly who are no longer able to drive nor have access to a car.

### COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SCHEMES

Community transport should complement rather than compete with commercial bus services. The competitor is the private car and not bus services.

One example of community transport is the North Wealden Easylink Service for elderly and disabled people who are unable to use other forms of transport. The pre-bookable, door-to-door, single minibus service carried 3,600 passengers in 2006 and generated £6,200 in fares (covering 40% of the costs). The service carries children to Chailey Heritage School and Hillside special school, and then provides the service for elderly passengers. It is funded by a combination of town and parish councils plus a contribution from the district council. It would cost significantly more to meet the two service needs separately. The Easylink scheme demonstrates that new public transport provision can be provided using the community transport sector working in partnership with local stakeholders.

Many minibuses and other vehicles are available under a wide variety of ownership but more co-operation is needed to maximise the use of these assets. More off peak use of school and social care vehicles could benefit others at marginal cost providing there is coordination and improved links with the health service.



**The Pension Service**

Part of the Department for Work and Pensions

East Sussex County Council and The Pension Service are working in partnership as the East Sussex Joint Team, working to raise older people's awareness of what services are available to them and to increase the take-up of benefits and entitlements. You can receive advice in your own home about Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance, Carer's Allowance, State Pension, Disability Living Allowance and Housing and Council Tax Benefit, and that includes answers to any queries you may have about benefits you already receive, and help with making a claim.

Ring Carolyne Ball on 01323 413018

E-mail [carolyne.ball@thepensionservice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:carolyne.ball@thepensionservice.gsi.gov.uk)

## **THIS AUTUMN, BRING ALONG YOUR ELECTRIC BLANKET FOR A FREE SAFETY CHECK**



**Wealden**  
District Council

[www.wealden.gov.uk](http://www.wealden.gov.uk)

Also free energy-efficient light bulbs and free information & advice on energy efficiency, security & fire prevention, benefits & pensions, adaptations & improvements to your home.

	<b>Blanket testing locations &amp; times:</b>
Monday 15th October:	Hailsham Fire Station, 10am to 12 noon Pevensey Fire Station, 2-4pm
Tuesday 16th October:	St Johns Church Hall, Polegate, 10am-12 noon Heathfield Fire Station, 2-4 pm
Wednesday 17th October:	Wadhurst Fire Station, 10am-12 noon Mayfield Fire Station, 2-4pm
Thursday 18th October:	Herstmonceux Fire Station, 10am-12 noon Ninfield Memorial Hall, 2-4pm
Friday 19th October:	Uckfield Fire Station, 10am-12 noon Crowborough Fire Station, 2-4pm

**Last year's successful week resulted in the testing of 395 blankets with a frightening 48% failure rate.**

### **OUR COMMITTEE**

Hanno Fry, Chairman: 01825 712410 William Porter, Treasurer: 01435 812177

Linda Graham, Secretary: 01892 770487 Sally Butler: 01825 732316 Ivy Elsey: 01435 863719

Renée Goddard: 01825 712410 Arnold Goldman: 01323 832311 Ann Haig McVitty: 01892 661763

Kath Harburn: 01825 761314 June Street: 01435 867497

### **CONTACT US**

We would love to hear from you if any of the topics in this newsletter interest or affect you. Please write to us, care of the Secretary, Wealden Senior Citizens' Partnership, 5 Rectory Field, Hartfield, East Sussex TN7 4JE, or email the Secretary or a management committee member via our website, [www.wealden-scp.org](http://www.wealden-scp.org)

It is important that we build up our membership, which is free, so please spread the word among friends and neighbours, and send us names, addresses and postcodes of anyone who would like to join. More copies of this newsletter are available on request.

Please let us know if you would like to attend our Annual General Meeting in Heathfield on Monday, October 1st (See page 1) For catering purposes, indicate here how many will be coming.....

NAME.....TEL. NO.....

ADDRESS.....Email Address.....

Send to: WSCP, 5 Rectory Field, Hartfield, TN7 4JE, ring 01892 770487 or email [lindagraham@wealden-scp.org](mailto:lindagraham@wealden-scp.org)