

Wandsworth Older People's Forum

Annual Report 2009

A Preventive Strategy for Older People in Wandsworth was launched at the end of 2008 with action plans for the seven dimensions of independence, health and healthy living, housing and the home, neighbourhood, social activities and keeping busy, getting out and about, income, information. A number of action plans were set up with action groups comprised of members from all the authorities providing services and from voluntary bodies including the Forum. A review of outcomes of the first year went to Council committees in November and the Forum has plans for discussion of these in the early part of 2010 with a conference planned for March. One very welcome development is the availability of advocacy for older people. The Forum has campaigned for many years for this, especially advocacy for older people having to move to more supported accommodation and not having any relatives or close friends to help them in making decisions.

The Forum has funding from Wandsworth Council to facilitate the voice of older people and does this through a network of older people's organisations with twice yearly conferences. In March there was a conference on the Older People's Strategy in Balham following on an earlier one in Putney. This was planned to try to involve people who might be less able to travel across the Borough. In November a conference was held on Lifelong Learning for older adults. There is concern that there is not a wide enough learning offer available to people who are not looking for skills for work. Keeping fit and getting started with the internet are the most likely classes as they have Government backing with funding.

The Forum spent time on the Government documents on Building a Society for All Ages and Shaping the Future of Care Together and comments were returned. On paying for care for the future the Forum supported a compulsory tax-based system as the fairest method and the one able to include everyone.

The Newsletter has been produced quarterly, posted to members and is available in libraries, sheltered housing and centres where older people meet. Open meetings have been held monthly on a variety of topics of interest, both service-based and fun, ending the year with SAGA holidays with enticing pictures of destinations, the Caribbean to the Antarctic, not forgetting holidays in Britain. Other subjects during the year were Battersea Dogs and Cats Home when we had two lovely little pug dogs to help advertise the service the home provides. Transition Town Wandsworth was a lively session making it fun to live sustainably, use less power and grow our own vegetables. Reports of these appear in the newsletter and where the topics are service-based it is an important source of information to the many readers who do not get far from home. We keep a programme of contact with

small groups who are not so well connected with information from the authorities and are always willing to send speakers for meetings of older people, no matter how small.

A questionnaire is circulated each September with the newsletter. This year we sought the reasons older people give for not being able to do the things they would like to do. A great variety of things they would like to do were quoted, walking, days out, sport and foreign holidays. The most frequently mentioned deterrent was physical difficulty and poor health. Loneliness and no one to go out with were also mentioned. There need to be more local centres where people can drop in, make new friends and where there can be interesting activities to replace those which are no longer possible.

The Forum sends representatives to meetings of many organisations in the Borough and keeps good contacts with the LINK as well as the Council, NHS, police and other local voluntary bodies. The Forum is represented on the Local Strategic Partnership.

Lilias Gillies
Hon Secretary

January 2010