

Gateshead Older People's Assembly

'The Voice'

February 2008

Words from our Chair

Dear members

Happy New Year seems a bit late in February but my best wishes to you all for 2008. We are expecting this year to be as busy as last year because so much needs to be done to get the Assembly up and running.

2008 is the year of the Volunteer and it is a good time to think about doing something to help others. We are expecting to have quite a lot of involvement with you as we build up the Assembly. We are planning to set up smaller assemblies throughout the Borough and you can become involved with these. Remember, this is your Organisation we want you to be part of it. If you want any further information about these assemblies please contact us.

We do hope you are keeping warm during this winter. If you need any help or advice about how best to heat your home and keep warm, telephone us and we will give you information and contact numbers for the relevant organisations who can help. You can also help each other by making sure friends and neighbours are alright. If you look out for them they will look out for you!!

Take Care of Yourselves

Esther Ward
Chair

This Newsletter was produced with help from



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Editor : Kerry Pattison

Assembly News

Hello

I would like to introduce myself as the Manager of Gateshead Older People's Assembly. I started work in November 2007 and I have very busy since.

I have spent my time looking at the Assembly and our plans for the future; I feel the next few years are going to be an exciting time for us and the older population of Gateshead.



We are looking at expanding the Assembly so we reach every area within the borough. With your help we will look at the real issues that matter to you and your local community. We will tackle these issues with our partners from across all sectors within Gateshead and at a regional level and make sure that you get the most from the services provided.

We see your voice as a powerful tool in getting your opinions heard and acted upon. This voice has become and will continue to be recognised as the main force to shape policy and service provision towards our older population.

We have already contacted major funding sources and started the application process so that we can take the Assembly forward and we will keep you informed of our progress.

We have started work on the recruitment of a valuable volunteer workforce as we wish to set up small 'Branch Assembly's in your area. The aim of these 'Branch Assembly's will be to give you the chance to discuss the real issues effecting your community. Your findings will then be reported back to us here at Central Office.

If you are interested in becoming involved with the Branch Assembly's or you are interested in volunteering your time in any other way then please complete the enclosed application form.

I look forward to working with you, if you are not already a member or a volunteer then please come along and join us during this exciting time.

Dates for Your Diary

March 08

Marie Curie Daffodil Campaign (Cancer Care)
 Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month
 Prostrate Cancer Awareness Week 21st to 27th
 Mental Health Action Week 26th to 1st April
 No Smoking Day 8th March

April 08

Arthritis Care Awareness Week 22nd to 28th

Local News In Brief

Department for Works and Pensions

The Local Pension Service works with partner organisations to raise older peoples' awareness of benefits available to them and to increase the take-up of entitlements. They have a large team of visiting officers based in the Gateshead area and can arrange urgent home visits for customers aged sixty or over. They offer a holistic approach and can complete claim forms for Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Retirement Pension, Carers Allowance, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. They can also arrange appointee-ship for those no longer able to manage their own benefits and provide advice and signposting to local organisations to meet individual needs. They are also helping to promote Community Care Grants within the Gateshead area.

What are Community Care Grants?

Community Care Grants are money from the Government to help people on Pension Credit to pay for important things. Community Care grants are part of the Social Fund and they can help older people who find themselves in need due to certain situations. The money does not have to be paid back.

Can I get a Community Care grant?

You may be able to get a Community Care grant to buy things if you need help to: Get back on your feet after being in hospital or a care home or stay in your own home and be independent. Or cope with difficult problems in your family (such as health problems). Or visit someone who is ill or go to a relative's funeral. There is a set amount of money for Community Care grants. Only the most important and urgent needs can be paid.

Savings

If you have £1000 or more in savings, you may not be able to get a Community Care grant.

How do I apply for a Community Care grant?

You have to fill in a form called SF300. You can get this from:

Your Pension Service Centre,
Jobcentre Plus or Social Security office.

Department for Work and Pensions website: www.dwp.gov.uk send the completed form to your local Jobcentre Plus office.

How can I find out more and get help to apply?

Staff at your local Pension Service or Age Concern office will advise you and help you to apply. All you have to do is: Call 0191 201 1636 and The Local Pension Service will arrange to visit you in your own home. Or, Call 0191 477 3559 to arrange and appointment with Age Concern Gateshead.

Local News In Brief

Do you know someone who cannot see well enough to read this?



Serious sight loss affects over 3,000 people in Gateshead and many are aged over 50. Sight loss can cause difficulties with daily living or make you feel isolated. Some people may just accept this and put it down to 'getting older' without knowing

that that expert support, advice and information is available right here in Gateshead from Sight Service; and it is free and confidential.

Sight Service is the local organisation for people who are visually impaired and they can help you, or someone you know, to have a better quality of life even though your sight is failing. Their qualified rehabilitation workers can demonstrate alternative ways to do many everyday activities like reading or preparing meals.

They have opportunities for leisure and social activities and can offer support for people who are socially isolated. They can show you specialist equipment and offer advise about being more independent in your home and outside as well as providing help with claims for financial benefits you may be entitled to.

To find out more, telephone Sight Service on (0191) 4785959 or call in at their Gateshead Resource Centre in Bensham Hospital, between 9.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday or go to www.sightservice.co.uk

Arthritis Care Champions – 'Caring for People in Gateshead'



Do You Suffer From Arthritis – How Can We Help?

- Would you like **FREE MAGAZINE – Arthritis News?**
- Would you like a comprehensive information pack of excellent well-written booklets about living and coping with arthritis?
- Would you like to hear how you could learn ways of managing your arthritis to help improve your quality of life?
- Would you like to make new friends?
- Would you like to partake in more social activities and visit new and interesting places?
- Do you just want to meet others who understand how you feel?
- Or do you just simply want to meet for a great social night and forget your pain and trouble?

If you have answered yes to any or all of those questions then contact:

Allison on 0191 4201302 or Visit the website at: www.arthritiscaregateshead.org.uk and see what a difference we can make to people with Arthritis.

Local News In Brief

Services for older people

Want to live independently in your own home safe in the knowledge that help is on hand at a touch of a button?

To guarantee peace of mind join Gateshead Care call

Our trained staff are available 24 hours a day 365 days a year to help you in an emergency or for reassurance whenever you need it.



'Having the service means that I can stay at home and keep my independence, which is very important to me. If I need help I know it's there.'



Gateshead Council
www.gateshead.gov.uk

For more information or a free demonstration in your home, contact Gateshead Care Call on 0191 433 2649.

Local News In Brief

Diabetes UK Gateshead

Would you like information and advice about Diabetes? If so then Diabetes UK Gateshead Voluntary Group can help.

The group was formed in 1981 and has a number of roles: education, support and fundraising. Each month they organise interesting speakers, so if you are newly diagnosed or if you have had Diabetes a long time there will be something of interest for you, family and friends are also very welcome. Meetings last about 90 minutes. Tea and Coffee are readily available and of course a chance to chat to one another. There are also a number of Diabetes UK publications available at the meetings.

Meetings are held in Quenellies restaurant at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital on the first Wednesday of the month commencing 5th March at 7.30pm running to June. Meetings start once more after the summer break in September through to December ending with Christmas Dinner in the restaurant.

For more information contact : Margaret Hunter M.B.E, Honorary Secretary on telephone number : 0191 477 2667

National News in Brief

Energy price rise to hit pensioners

The UK's fourth biggest energy supplier Npower said it would be increasing both electricity and gas prices by percentages in double figures. Industry experts said they could be as high as 17% rises for both gas and electricity customers. It is the first move by an energy supplier to increase standard rates after last spring's price cuts.

John Berry, secretary of the North East Pensioners' Association, said: "I think it is a disgrace. It seems at the moment that as soon as we resolve one thing, for example the question of bus fares, another thing comes along. "It isn't exactly the smartest time of the year to put pensioners in the position when they will have to consider turning down their heating."

Npower's rise is likely to be followed by a flurry of similar increases by other suppliers. Npower, which is owned by German company RWE, has already increased its online tariff for new customers, upping bills by 17% the week before Christmas. British Gas parent Centrica also last month announced increases to its market tracker price, increasing bills by 13% for gas and 15% for electricity.

One way to help with these costs is to make sure your home is as energy efficient as possible. Anyone living in the Gateshead Borough aged 60 or over qualifies for free Cavity wall and Loft Insulation regardless of income. Contact Gateshead Warmzone on (0191) 4771919 for help and advice.

National News in Brief

Prime Minister's Speech on Public Health

Reacting to Prime Minister Gordon Brown's speech on public health screening delivered in January 08, Paul Cann, director of policy & external relations at Help the Aged comments:

'The Prime Minister's emphasis on prevention through measures such as screening for conditions like stroke or heart disease during mid-life is welcome. However, Help the Aged believes that far more should be done for the current older age group. Screening is a key tool of public health and prevention and should not be limited by age unless it is proven from clinical research that this is justified.

'In addition, given the demographic make-up of the country, Help the Aged wants to see greater focus on certain conditions which devastate the lives of older people but which can be prevented. Falls are a prime example - over half of hospital admissions for accidental injury result from a fall and half of those who suffer a hip fracture never regain their former level of function.

'Incontinence is a further example of where greater work and provision is urgently needed. Around one in ten of the population will suffer from continence issues at some point in our lives, with risk increasing as we get older. While this debilitating condition can be treated, many cases go undiagnosed and can cause real misery for many people.

'With issues such as these at front of mind, what is needed from the Prime Minister therefore is enhanced commitment to tackling a range of public health issues. Doing so will result in a more rounded and effective public health drive which benefits the whole population.'

Tokens for Travel

In April 2008 the Government will introduce a bus pass in England which will bring free off peak nationwide bus travel to everyone over 60. This is an excellent sign of progress and marks a great success for everyone who campaigned hard for older people's transport rights. But this benefit will not reach those older people who are unable to use buses because of a disability, lack of mobility or lack of access to services. For these people, a bus pass is meaningless.

The Tokens for Travel campaign is calling for all local authorities in England to offer travel tokens as an alternative option to the national bus pass. If this is done every one will have access to a travel concession they can use and all older people will see improvements in their mobility and independence. Travel tokens can be used on taxis, dial-a-ride schemes and many other transport modes and are an excellent alternative option for people who can't use buses. Only with the choice between the bus pass and tokens will all older people have access to a travel concession they can use.

If you would like to find out more information about the Travel Tokens Campaign contact **The Assembly** for an information pack on **0191 438 1721** or it can be downloaded at www.helptheaged.org.uk.

Members Page

A Poem about Ageing

Old age, I've decided, is a gift.

I am for the first time in my life, the person I have always wanted to be.

Oh, not my body! I sometimes despair over my body, the wrinkles, the baggy eyes, and the sagging bum and often I am taken aback by that old person that lives in my mirror (who looks like my mother!) but I don't agonize over those things for long.

I would never trade my amazing friends, my wonderful life, my loving family for less grey hair or a flatter belly.

As I've aged, I've become more kind to myself and less critical of myself. I've become my own friend. I don't chide myself for eating that extra cookie, or for not making my bed, or for buying that silly cement gecko that I didn't need, but looks so avante-garde on my patio. I am entitled to a treat, to be messy, to be extravagant.

I have seen too many dear friends leave this world too soon; before they understood the great freedom that comes with aging. Whose business is it if I choose to read or play on the computer until 4am and sleep until noon?

I will dance with myself to those wonderful tunes of the 60s, 70s & 80s and if I, at the same time, wish to weep over a lost love...I will.

I will walk the beach in a swim suit that is stretched over a bulging body and will dive into the waves with abandon if I choose to, despite the pitying glances from the jet set. They too will get old.

I know I am sometimes forgetful, but there again, some of life is just as well forgotten and I eventually remember the important things.

Sure, over the years my heart has been broken. How can your heart not break when you lose a loved one, or when a child suffers, or even when somebody's beloved pet gets hit by a car? Broken hearts are what give us strength and understanding and compassion. A heart never broken is pristine and sterile and will never know the joy of being imperfect.

I am so blessed to have lived long enough to have my hair turning grey and to have my youthful laughs be forever etched into grooves on my face. So many have never laughed and so many have gone before their hair could turn silver.

As you get older, it's easier to be positive. You care less about what other people think. I don't question myself anymore. I've even earned the right to be wrong.

So, to answer your question, I like being old, it has set me free. I like the person I have become. I am not going to live forever, but while I am still here. I will not waste time lamenting what could have been, or worrying about what will be and I shall eat dessert every single day (if I feel like it).

Members Page

Remember When

I would like to invite our reader to send in their memories for a new 'Remember When' section, here are two stories from Mrs M Rice aged 96.

'When I was growing up, we didn't have much at all and I remember going to school and trying to write my school work out with a yellow crayon as that's all I had. When I got home I had to finish my school work off, but realised I couldn't make out the yellow crayon in the light of the gas lamp so I wasn't able to do it. The next day at school my explanation fell on deaf ears and I was given the stick. Children don't realise how lucky they are these days.'

'Every day on the way to school, I would walk past the local chemists window and stare at the most beautiful Waterman's Fountain Pen you had ever seen. It was blue and silver and came with a purple velvet pouch. I would dream of owning that pen, and when Christmas came I begged my Mother and Father to buy it for me, but I knew deep down they would not be able to afford it as it was ten and six.

Christmas morning came and we got the usual orange and nuts in an old stocking, then something caught my eye. My hands started to shake as I opened the tissue paper to reveal, a cheap fountain pen, not the one I wanted !!

When I went back to school it turned out nearly all the children in school had got one of these pens as someone had been selling them cheap and to make matters worse the nib broke the first time I used it and I was so frightened to tell my Mother I hid it in my bedroom and told her I wanted to keep it for special occasions!'

Members News

Can I point out to all 'Forum' members that there is no need to complete a new membership form. All Forum members are automatically now members of the Gateshead Older People's Assembly.

Do you have any tips or advice to share, poems, stories, jokes or points of view? All ideas for **your** page are welcome. Deadline for articles to be included in May's newsletter is 1st April 08. Please contact us at our **new address**:



65 High Street

Felling

Gateshead

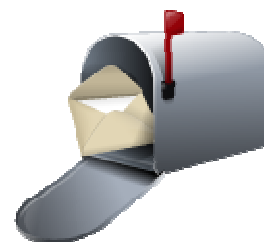
Tyne and Wear

NE10 9LU

Telephone 0191 438 1721

Fax 0191 469 6854

E-mail : admin.assembly@btconnect.com



Gateshead Older People's Assembly

Membership Form

Name: Mr/ Mrs/Ms.....
 Address.....
 Postcode.....Telephone No.....
 Signature.....E Mail

What is your Ethnic Origin.....

For monitoring purposes could you please complete:
 Circle which age band you are in :

50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90+
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Would you like to participate in any of the following?

Events	Committee	Office	Focus Groups	Other
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Do you have any special requirements?

Vision	Speech	Hearing	Mobility	Other
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How did you find out about us?

Literature	Event	Word of Mouth	TV / Radio	Web / Other
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**Many thanks, please return form to:
 Gateshead Older People's Assembly
 65 High Street
 Felling, Gateshead
 NE10 9LU
 Charity Reg No : 1101622**