

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2009

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From the Chair

I pray that by the time you receive this publication we shall have seen the last of the snow and ice. I hope you have managed to keep warm through these adverse conditions. Do you know that if you are 70 years of age or over you may be able to have your house insulated, cavity walls and loft, at no cost. **Contact the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre on 0800512012** in order to have this work carried out. I have just had my property insulated, free of charge, and I can assure you that having this done certainly makes a difference.

I am sorry that once again it becomes necessary to talk about our financial situation. Our level of unrestricted reserves has reached a worryingly low level and the Board have been faced with having to make some hard decisions in trying to retrieve the position from this delicate state. Cuts are having to be made across the whole structure, some staff are being asked to work shorter hours and other cost cutting measures are being put into place. Ways of raising income are also being looked at. Whilst there will be an effect on our services, I hope this will be as minimal as can be. The Board recognises, and appreciates, the cooperation of the staff in this difficult time.

We would like you to consider leaving a gift to Age Concern York in your will. A flyer is enclosed (apologies if you did not receive one with the last Newsletter) - please could you also show this to any family members and friends who you think might be interested in supporting our charity in this way. Unfortunately we all get older and one day they may need our help.

Leaving a Gift to Age Concern York in your Will could "Save a Service" from being reduced in size or even cut altogether. It could therefore make a huge difference. As we said in the last Newsletter there is still "Concern for Age Concern York" and we appeal to you all to do what you can to make sure that the charity can continue to support the older people of York and district for many years to come.

[Remember - we do have a small booklet regarding making a will - if you would like to receive one please contact Jean Weston at the Walmgate office.]

I am sorry to report that we will be losing two of our stalwarts who have decided to retire in the early part of the year, namely Jenny Jarred, from Net Neighbours, and Vi Butler, from CBSS. Jenny, who developed the Net Neighbours scheme from the beginning, will have left by the time you read this. Vi retires in the Spring. Both will be missed. Also leaving is Peter Atkinson from Practical Services at the end of March. On behalf of the Board I wish them a long, healthy, and happy retirement and express thanks for their work on behalf of Age Concern York.

Jeff Mortimer

Call us on 621020/627995

NetNeighbours

By the time you are reading this I will have bid a fond farewell to Age Concern York and NetNeighbours, as I will have retired. I started with Age Concern on the 19th October 1998 as Hospital Aftercare Organiser and since then there have been a lot of changes.

Initially we would visit the hospital twice a week, leaving our coats and bags at reception, and visiting every ward checking for discharges of elderly people whom we could help on their return home. Eventually, we managed to get a foothold into the hospital with a base on the third floor. I say a base, and not an office, as the space was not much bigger than a phone box, with a vent directly into the men's toilet. I will say no more and let your imagination do the rest. After a lot of negotiations we managed to get a larger space, a storage room on ward 24 where Age Concern hospital services are still working, when the ward is not closed due to a virus.

It was during this time that Age Concern was approached by York University's Psychology Department as they were looking at modern technology and older people. They wanted to see whether there was a way that the Internet could be used to do the shopping for older people who do not have access to the Internet. They had the technology and we had the older people, so we worked together. That was over four

years ago and when the University bowed out we secured funding to continue the service and at that time we did Internet shopping for 15 people. We now do grocery Internet Shopping for 70 older people of York.

A couple of years ago, wanting to reduce my hours, I handed over the hospital side of my work to my colleague, Nicky Openshaw and I continued to develop the NetNeighbours scheme.

One way we hoped to develop NetNeighbours was to have volunteers ring one older person, take their shopping



list over the phone and at the same time have a chat - a sort of phone befriending. The volunteer would then put the shopping onto the Internet. Hence the name NetNeighbours, working on the Net and being Neighbourly. To date we have 14 volunteers who regularly ring an older person for their shopping and have built up good relationships over the phone. We found that some people would like to do some voluntary work but

work full time and do not have the time to do the 'normal' sort of volunteering. This way they find they can often do it from work or when they get home on an evening. The time taken can be anything from half an hour to an hour, depending on how long you chat.

Once I had announced my impending retirement it was decided to put NetNeighbours back under the hospital umbrella as many referrals come through the hospital and the phone we use is based in the Age Concern hospital office. Nicky will therefore run the NetNeighbours scheme.

So to help NetNeighbours go from strength to strength it is needing more volunteers, so if you or you know someone that could be involved please do not hesitate get in touch with Nicky, 726191.

I would like to say thank you to all the volunteers and staff I have worked with during my time with Age Concern and a special thank you to Sylvia Doughty who as a volunteer and coworker has always given me 110% support.



FIRST CALL FIFTY PLUS

The New Citywide Signposting Service for people over 50

You may remember that last year a substantial survey took place to identify the services that we, as potential older service users, felt are needed. The two main areas highlighted as being a priority were a **Handyperson Service** and a clear single point of contact for information regarding all services/opportunities for older people - in other words a **Signposting Service**.

Sadly we at ACY did not win the contract to continue with our well established handyperson service, and the new service to be run by the Yorkshire Housing Foundation has started quietly from 2nd March just gone.

ACY did however win the contract for the new signposting service which is to be called **FIRST CALL FIFTY PLUS** and will operate from our Age Concern York offices in Walmgate. The intention is that the service will go beyond other signposting services - hence the "plus". Our success in achieving this service is solely based on our proven track record of running quality advice and information services for over 35 years. The purpose of First Call is to **be** that first call for basic information about where services and or activities can be found. Information can range from how to dispose of an old refrigerator! to how to engage with social services regarding someone needing residential care or where to go for financial advice; in fact anything!. The extensive Age Concern York database of such information will underpin this new service.

Currently new leaflets and posters are being developed. We are seeking the advice of older people and specialist groups to ensure that the material meets their needs and is user friendly. Our I.T. systems are also being developed and the First Call and ACY websites will be linked to other service providers around the City to ensure wide and easy access.

First Call Fifty plus will differ from some other signposting services around the country, because it will be available directly to the public. People can either contact the service direct, or they may be given the contact details through other service providers such as the Council or a voluntary group. First Call will be a further resource for professionals (care managers, fire officers, police workers and/or health workers) to use in support of their service users. It will work in partnership with Age Concern York and other specialist service providers in the city.

The telephone number for the service will be announced at the launch which is on 8th April 2009 at the St Sampson's Centre. Website details will be available shortly and via the Age Concern York website at www.ageconcernyork.org.uk.

AGE CONCERN ENGLAND AND HELP THE AGED MERGER.

This is a brief paragraph to keep you up to date with the breaking news about Age Concern England and Help the Aged merging. The merger IS official and will take place from 1st April 2009. The "NEW CHARITY" formed, has the registered legal name of AGE UK. However the new brand or operating name is still to be decided. This merger is initially ONLY between the national organisation Age Concern England and the national Help the Aged organisation. Age Concern York - as you know - is a partner in a national federation of which Age Concern England is the national representative. Age Concern York's board of trustees have been asked to consider whether ACY will become a full partner of the new brand during the year 2010. If we become a partner in the new larger body our name will change to ??????? York.! We are assured by the new Chair and Executive of Age UK that should we become a partner we will always remain fully in control of our local activities, services, fundraising and decision making. If you want to know more please contact Jeff Mortimer, Chair or Sally Hutchinson C.O. at the Walmgate Office.

End of an era? Perhaps not!

Some readers may already be aware that a new Handy-person service is due to become operational in early March.

The new service will be run by Yorkshire Housing Foundation and largely replaces the service we have been organising through our Practical Services team. However, our service will continue and provide an overlap until the end of March.

There will be some significant differences between the new service and our own - chiefly the new service will not be for just for older people, it will also have a remit to support those who have physical or learning disabilities. All clients will need to be on low incomes (i.e. be in receipt of means tested benefits) Eligible clients will be expected to pay for material costs. Small jobs will be undertaken such as changing light bulbs, taking down and putting back up curtains and also some limited gardening and decorating. The service will also offer health and safety checks in the home including identifying tripping hazards - frayed carpets and trailing wires etc.

Those seeking assistance should call: 01904 754505 from 2nd March 2009.

So - is it goodbye to Age Concern York Practical Services?

From our perspective it has of course come as absolutely no

surprise that there is a very considerable and continuing need for this sort of service. We have after all been providing this help of this nature for our clients for over 20 years. Over all these years we have fought "tooth and nail" to provide this essential area of help. We have managed to find the necessary funding to run the service from a wide range of sources including British Gas, Lloyds TSB Foundation, twice and the National Lottery, also twice.

We must thank our Handyman Peter Atkinson who will be retiring slightly early as a result of these changes. Peter has been with us for 14 years - starting initially as a volunteer with our Befriending service; then moving on to be one of our Gardening Supervisors and ultimately finishing his time with us as our sole paid handyman. Stephen Pigott our Practical Services Organiser and Peter have worked alongside a small but dedicated team of volunteers many of whom have come to us courtesy of the Rotary Club of York Vikings. Quantifying the work done over so many years is impossible to do, but the service has helped many thousands of vulnerable older people and I think we can justifiably be proud of what we have achieved.

What about the future? We are hoping to keep our volunteers and Stephen will be staying with us spending most of his time doing different work, but also being available

to organise our team of very willing volunteers to undertake jobs which perhaps will fall outside the scope of the new Handy-person service.

We will have to wait and see how the new service settles in but we will be giving it our full support; however, we will still be here with our volunteers if we are needed - experience suggests we will be!

James Player
Deputy Chief Officer

In Safe Hands

'In Safe Hands' was rated as 'good' in a recent inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspection. All the team worked hard for the inspection in the absence of a manager and were all pleased with the result. 'In Safe Hands' is now in the process of recruiting a new manager for the scheme.

We continue to welcome any volunteers to the scheme and also any referrals from carers who are in need of a break.

The fundraising committee will be producing a new quiz sheet shortly. Anyone interested can contact the team who will forward copies which will be priced at £1 per sheet.

