



# The Elders Council of Newcastle

Older People working for Older People

Bumper Christmas Edition

December 2008

## Elders Council of Newcastle

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## Growing Older and Warmer!

The Elders Council will be holding its second Older and Wiser Day on **Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2009 from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. at the Centre for Life, Times Square, Newcastle** on the theme of Keeping Warm. An invitation to this event is enclosed with this newsletter and you are welcome to bring your friends. We anticipate that this event will be very popular, so please book early by calling 255 1988 or returning your reply slip or e-mail: [elderscouncil@qualityoflife.org.uk](mailto:elderscouncil@qualityoflife.org.uk).

The event will include a wide range of information stands as well as opportunities for you to put your questions to a panel of experts.

**Don't miss this opportunity to  
find out more about keeping  
warm and keeping well.**



**THE ELDERS COUNCIL  
NEEDS YOU TO HELP  
PROMOTE ITS WORK.**

**PLEASE PASS THIS  
NEWSLETTER ON TO  
OTHERS WHO MIGHT  
BE INTERESTED.**



## Keep Yourself Warm

As the weather turns colder and the nights draw in, most of us will be using more gas and electricity than we have during the summer months. This can be a worry for many people, as the rising cost of energy means that bills can start to become unmanageable. However, there are ways of reducing your bills.

### Top tips for reducing fuel bills

- Insulate your walls and roof. All residents over 60 are eligible for free cavity-wall and loft insulation from Newcastle Warm Zone. Telephone them on (0191) 277 7373.
- Insulate your hot water tank. Newcastle Warm Zone can help with this, too.
- Set your heating at a comfortable level, usually around 21°C.
- Fit low-energy light bulbs. These can save up to £10 a year per light bulb.
- Always turn off the lights when you leave a room.
- Don't leave electrical appliances on standby.
- Dry clothes outside or on drying racks and make sure that clothes have gone through the spin cycle of the washing machine if you have to use the tumble-dryer.
- Check your bills. Always check meter readings to make sure that bills are accurate.
- Take advantage of the best payment methods. Pay by Direct Debit if possible; and, if you have gas and electricity, buy them from the same supplier. Avoid pre-payment meters. You may qualify for cheaper tariffs if you are in financial hardship.
- Switch supplier. You can save around £200 a year by switching supplier if you have never switched before. If you buy gas and electricity from the same supplier and pay direct debit, you can also save on your bills.

Visit [www.informationnow.org.uk](http://www.informationnow.org.uk) and read the articles on **Gas and electricity** and **Heating and insulation** for advice on switching your fuel supplier and the organisations that can help you.

## **Getting energy advice**

Newcastle City Council's **Energy Centre** provides a telephone helpline for enquiries about energy use in the home, how to reduce fuel bills, and how to keep warm. They can give advice on grants and other help that is available in Newcastle and may also be able to provide home visits for Your Homes Newcastle tenants. Contact the Energy Centre on (0191) 281 1303 or email [energy@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:energy@newcastle.gov.uk)

If you have a complaint about your gas or electricity supplier, or a problem with your bills, your first point of contact should be their Complaints Department and it may be that this is all it takes to get the problem sorted out. However, if you are not satisfied with the response to your complaint, or you need further advice on how to progress, you should then contact Consumer Direct. **Consumer Direct** is the government-funded telephone and online service offering information and advice on consumer issues, and will advise you on your rights and how to handle your complaint.

It may be that you require further assistance because of the urgency or complexity of the problem, or because your personal circumstances mean that you are unable to pursue the complaint yourself. In this case, Consumer Direct can refer you to an organisation called Consumer Focus which has an 'Extra Help Unit' for vulnerable customers. Consumer Focus has replaced Energywatch as the new champion for consumers' interests. Contact Consumer Direct on 08454 040 506 or visit [www.consumerdirect.gov.uk](http://www.consumerdirect.gov.uk)

## **Reducing your water bills**

Having a water-meter installed can reduce water usage and could save you money. The benefits of having a water-meter include:

- You pay for the water you use, after you've used it.
- You get a free survey, where Northumbrian Water discuss the right location for the meter with you, and
- There is free installation (in most cases).

Whether or not you save money by having a water-meter depends on the number of people in your house; whether you are a high, average or low user; and how much you are currently paying on an unmeasured basis.

The first step to help you decide whether a water-meter is right for you is to work out how much water your household uses in a year. You can do this by telephoning Northumbrian Water on 0845 717 1100; or you can use their simple online calculator on [www.nwl.co.uk](http://www.nwl.co.uk).

## **Tips for saving water**

When you have a water-meter, you will want to use water wisely, so that you aren't paying for more than you need. However, even if you don't have a water-meter, if everyone uses water economically it helps to conserve the valuable resources that we have.

It's easy to reduce your water consumption – not by going without, but by reducing the amount of water that you waste. The following are some tips that will help you to do this.

- Replace the washer on a dripping tap. A tap that drips at the rate of two drops per second will lose 26 litres of water a day, which is almost enough to use for a shower.
- If you are able to, have a shower rather than a bath. A five-minute shower uses around 35 litres of water, which is a third of the water it takes to fill your bath.
- Reduce the amount of time you use a garden sprinkler for. A sprinkler can get through as much water in an hour as an average family would use in a day.
- Wait until you have a full load before using your washing-machine. A normal wash cycle uses 80 litres of water.
- Fit a 'save-a-flush' into your toilet cistern. A 'save-a-flush' can save up to one litre of water per flush. It's easy to install in most cisterns and you can get one free of charge from Northumbrian Water by calling 0845 717 1100 or by visiting [www.nwl.co.uk](http://www.nwl.co.uk).
- If possible install a water butt to collect rain-water to use in your garden.

## **£300 Warm Front Voucher**

If you are aged 60 or over, own your own home and have a heating system that is broken or you don't have heating at all, then you may be eligible for a Warm Front voucher. This is for people who are not on benefits and are aged 60 and over. The voucher can be used to repair or go towards a new heating system. To get the voucher, call 0800 316 6012; you will be asked if your heating is broken and to this answer "Yes."

You will be asked if you want a benefit check; decline this and state that you are interested in the voucher scheme. The voucher will be sent to you with six installers listed with it but you can nominate your own installer as long as they are registered.

**The Warm Front Grant of up to £2700** If you receive certain benefits and own your home or rent it from a private landlord, then you could claim a grant towards heating or insulation. Call free on 0800 316 6011.

## Doris Eastman

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of Doris Eastman in early October. Doris joined the Elders Council in the very early stages of its development, and was a stalwart supporter and champion of its work.

Doris regularly attended events organised by the Elders Council and Quality of Life Partnership, putting forward her ideas and experiences and making a strong case for supporting older people to live independently. Doris took part in several of the projects we organised, most notably the HOME project and Life around Shields Road.

She was a regularly user of the Hop to the Shops service and helped to shape its development. In addition to all the work she did with the Elders Council, Doris was also active in many other aspects of community life.



She volunteered as a telephone befriender for Newcastle Society for Blind People. She walked the boards with the Walker Crazy Gang drama group and was very active in her local church. Doris was well-known for her superb scones, and shared her recipes with the German students who worked with us last year, thereby spreading her fame into Europe

Doris will be warmly remembered by many of us for her warmth and above all, her feisty approach to life!

### **Bereavement and Loss Service**

Age Concern Newcastle would like to recruit new volunteers to meet the demand for their Bereavement and Loss Service. Volunteers will need to attend a Bereavement Awareness and Listening Skills course on Friday, 23 and 30 January and Monday 2 and 9 February 2009 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at MEA House.

You will need to attend all the training sessions in order to complete the course; and you'll also have to have a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. The ability to befriend on a regular basis and attend monthly support sessions are a requirement of the service. If you are interested or would like more details, please contact Audrey Carey on 0191 235 9915.

# Working Group Updates

## Action for Health – Senior Citizens in Newcastle (Working Group on Health and Social Care)

Mental Health Services for older people have been under scrutiny at meetings in October and November, with presentations and discussion.

- Gibside Unit on Newcastle General Hospital site has provided assessment and treatment for older people with mental health needs, including challenging behaviour. This unit is now being phased out (although other in-patient wards, Castleside and Akenside, remain on the NGH site) because we are told that alternative facilities have been developed to support people at home.
- Dementia Care Strategy – the national strategy is being launched after a period of consultation. We are studying the content of the strategy and considering the implications for local services.

In discussing these policies, both local and national, we would welcome the participation of anyone who has direct experience of using these services.

The NHS North of Tyne Strategic Plan will be the topic of discussion at a meeting on Friday, 5 December, 10.30 a.m.-12.30 p.m. These are the services that influence the wellbeing and health of all residents in Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland. The strategy is moving to a preventive approach to focus on issues such as smoking, diet, sexual health, and teenage pregnancies. It is important that older people have a say about what matters to their health, so a good attendance is needed so we can contribute everyone's views.

## Housing

Several members of the Elders Council attended a focus group with Karen Croucher of the University of York to explore what motivates people to stay living in a family home and what prompts them to downsize. The outcome from this lively discussion will form part of a report to the National Institute of Chartered Surveyors, but will also be used to inform our local Older People's Accommodation Strategy. The University of York have given the Elders Council a donation of £100 in recognition of our support to this work. Thank you to everyone who took part.

Members of the Housing Group are continuing to work with Newcastle City Council on the development of the Older People's Accommodation Strategy. To ensure that we are up to date with services, we have had presentations from the Loan Equipment Service and the Home Improvement Agency (Anchor Staying Put).

## Older Person Friendly City Working Group

City Centre – The Working Group is still involved in following up issues raised by the City Centre Report. With the publicity generated by the publication of the House of Commons Select committee report on public toilets, the time is right for a further push for developments in Newcastle. The way forward seems to be for community toilet schemes which involve local businesses, cafes, pubs etc, opening their facilities for public use, with a subsidy or other incentives from the Local Authority. Successful schemes are now running in towns of all sizes so

### WHAT ABOUT IT NEWCASTLE – WHERE IS OUR PLAN?

Parks and Recreation Areas – The report of our work on this topic is now being printed. We are putting forward recommendations to make parks safer and more attractive to older people whether they go there for a walk, a peaceful sit down or a stimulating activity. And if you fancy going to your local park to use some equipment for healthy outdoor exercise, then we have information about what's available. After all, the children have lovely play facilities in parks, so why not the oldies too? (See the letter on p25). If you would like a copy of this report, please apply to the office.



## Transport Working Group

In recent weeks the Transport Working Group has been involved in two specific projects concerning the Haymarket bus station and the Nexus Bus Strategy.

Haymarket Bus station - One of the major difficulties is the access for buses to the Haymarket bus station and the problems of congestion in the surrounding streets. We have been looking at these problems for some time and have met the bus station officials, the City Council and Nexus. The good news is that they are all aware of the problem, and improvements to traffic flow and the layout of the bus station are in the pipeline. Unfortunately, these sort of changes take time but it is expected that we will see some effect in the next few months. The on-going saga of the damaged roof looks to be coming to an end and we can expect changes soon.

Longer term, there are upgrades being planned in the hope that the standard can be raised to the level of the quality of the new Eldon Square bus station, which is now fully operational and liked very much by our members.

Bus Strategy - Members of the Transport Working Group joined with members of the Older Person Friendly City Working Group and the Trustees to hear a presentation by Nexus on their recently launched bus strategy "Charter for Growth".

The strategy is a consultation document which outlines their vision for improving bus services in Tyne and Wear up to 2012. The hope is to win over more people to use the bus which, in turn, will enable them to help to ensure that key routes will be there in the future and enable services to be developed to make sure that everyone can easily get to work, to the shops, to leisure facilities or to the doctor's, regardless of whether they have a car.

The principal objective is to make buses more attractive for people to use by making sure that they have a bus network that is accessible, affordable, reliable and safe.

The Transport Working Group already has a huge amount of information from its members and its other extensive range of contacts and will be preparing a response on behalf of the Elders Council. We will try to cover all of the points you have mentioned that concern you but we would still welcome any additional comments that you may have. Please write to Linda Ward at the address on the front of this newsletter.

## Learning and Culture Working Group

At our meeting in August, the group reviewed current coverage of these two important topics.

We decided to prioritise areas which might be focused on more effectively if we got together in smaller groups working between the main meetings. So far, we have looked at:

- **working with Arts and Life Science organisations to benefit older people** with some encouraging developments to be reported in the New Year;
- **exploring older people's participation in planning and using museums, especially those to be involved in the Science City project;** we are researching the best ways to go about getting a say in provision that suits our age range;

- **developing a drama and song group to explore learning and culture issues;** the group will meet for the first time on Monday, 19 January at 2 p.m. in the Elders Council Office, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, MEA House.;
- **showcasing the creative work of older people** using a display area in a meeting room in the Quality of Life Partnership Office, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, MEA House, Ellison Place (see below: Gadgies' Gallery);
- **monitoring and engaging with national and local adult education provision;** this continues to be an important aspect of the group's work, especially in the light of the government's consultation on *Adult Learning – The Way Ahead* this year to which we contributed;

If you are interested in any of these topics or have useful relevant experience and would like to join us, please ring and let us know. You will be very welcome at our meetings.

### **Have you got something for our Gadgies' Gallery?**

Do you paint, draw, sew, embroider, produce photographs, write poetry etc.? If so, we need your contributions to what we hope will be a constant but changing display of older people's creative work in the office where it can be seen by visitors. Please ring the Elders Council office on 255 1988 for details.

### **STOP PRESS ..... Is there light at the end of the tunnel?**

We now have a first response to the consultation mentioned above from DIUS (Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills) which looks promising though there are many issues, including financial ones, still to be resolved in detailed plans which we understand are due for issue in December. Copies of this interim report are available, if you would like to see it, from the office.

With regard to the situation in Newcastle, Councillor John Shipley flagged up the adult learning concession for older people issue in his Portfolio Report to the city Council on 5 November 2008 as follows:

*"In the context of the planned introduction of free swimming for the over- 60s from next April, I have asked officers to look again at whether concessions should be re-introduced for adult learning. This is a complex legal issue on which advice is essential. I have asked that the position be clarified by the end of the year."*

We will keep you posted about any actions or changes that result from this.



Welcome to the first dedicated Active Ageing section within the Elders Council Newsletter. Here you will find information about all of the new Active Ageing Activity Programmes that are being developed for people over 50 throughout the City.

For this issue, the focus will be on **Walking** with details about **two** new Active Ageing walking programmes launching in the New Year as well as details of other local walking programmes that are on offer.

So if you're wanting to burn off the Xmas excess or longing to make a change in the new year, then why not drop me a line and join the growing numbers of people taking part in Active Ageing? Best Wishes. 😊

Michelle Mordue  
Active Ageing Development Worker  
Tel No: 0191 255 1985

## 15 Reasons to Try and Walk More in the New Year:

### Walking:

- boosts your metabolism
- raises energy levels
- enhances mental well-being
- helps to control body weight
- improves sleep
- reduces blood pressure
- reduces body fat
- reduces the risk of diabetes
- reduces the risk of stroke
- reduces the risk of cancer,
- reduces the risk of arthritis
- reduces the risk and/or effects of anxiety and stress
- increases bone density, helping to prevent osteoporosis
- helps flexibility and co-ordination, hence reducing the risk of falls
- may reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease

## But what if I hate exercise?

Walking doesn't need to feel like exercise. It can just be part of your daily routine. You could stop driving to the local shops and walk instead. If you use the bus, get off one stop early and walk. Or take the stairs instead of the lift. Or walk your dog that little bit further. Every extra step counts 😊

## New Active Ageing Walking Programmes For 2009:

### ▪ City Centre Walks:

The New Year sees the beginning of a 12-week programme of a 1-hour lunch-time walking session from four main routes: Leazes Park, Exhibition Park, The Quayside and Castle Keep. All sessions will be led by a qualified walk leader, and begin and end at the Monument Metro Station.

These walks are perfect for beginners and/or people wanting a leisurely stroll with an opportunity to socialise with others.



### ▪ Local History Walks:

A series of 1- or 2-hour walks combining sites of interest within the City. All walks are led by a qualified Local History Tutor and Walk Leader and are a great way of combining gentle physical activity whilst learning more about our City's fantastic heritage. (Please note that both walks will incur a small charge per session. Cost to be confirmed in the New Year.)



### ▪ Nordic Walking Programme:

A six-week Active Ageing Nordic Walking programme was launched in early November with nine participants.

Routes take a variety of terrains including walks of increasing length in Exhibition Park, Leazes Park, the Town Moor, Quayside, Hexham and Corbridge.

A second 6 week programme will be launched in February costing £15.

**To reserve your place, or for more information about these programmes, please contact Michelle Mordue direct on 0191 255 1985.**

## **Other Local Walking Programmes:**

- **1- 3 miles (ideal for beginners).**

**East End Walks For All** meets every Tuesday at 10 am at the East End Pool and Library cafe in Byker and is **Free**. For more information, contact Rosie Milne, East End Physical Activity Co-ordinator, on **0191 278 3184** or email [rosie.milne@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:rosie.milne@newcastle.gov.uk)

**North and Outer West Walks For All** meets every Tuesday at 10 am at **Simonside Community Centre** and is **Free**. For more information, contact **Alan Delgano**, **North West Physical Activity Co-ordinator**, on 0191 278 3184 or email [alan.delgano@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:alan.delgano@newcastle.gov.uk)

WonderWALKS are a series of short health walks in the West End that are led by a qualified walk-leader. They take place every Monday afternoon and cost 50p. Occasional day trips are also organised. For more details, contact either Maggy Crane, the Search Project, on 0191 273 7443 or Debbie Smith, Inner West Physical Activity Co-ordinator, on 0191 278 3184.

- **3 - 8 miles (for those who walk or exercise regularly).**

**East End Walks For All** meets on Thursdays at 10 am at the East End Pool and Library cafe in Byker and is **Free**. For more information, contact Rosie Milne, East End Physical Activity Co-ordinator, on **0191 278 3184** or email [rosie.milne@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:rosie.milne@newcastle.gov.uk)

**North and Outer West Walks For All** offers two different **Free** walks from:

- **Blakelaw Neighbourhood Centre** on Fridays at 10 am
- **Lemington Centre** on Mondays one week and Fridays the next, times vary

For more information, contact Alan Delgano, North West Physical Activity Co-ordinator on **0191 278 3184** or email [alan.delgano@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:alan.delgano@newcastle.gov.uk)

- **8 miles + (for hardy walkers)**

**Red Kite Ramblers** go out fortnightly on Saturdays, leaving by coach from a variety of locations. Three groups offer walks between 8 and 14 miles covering areas including Northumberland, Scottish Borders, Durham, Weardale, Yorkshire, Cumbria and The Lake District. Annual Membership is £20 and walks cost **£10**. For more information, contact Mike Young on **0191 237 4957**.

**Tyneside Ramblers Association** organise walks with coach outings every Sunday and Wednesday. There is a choice of shorter and longer walks on each outing which start from different points en route but converge to meet for the return coach journey to Newcastle City Centre. Prices vary between £6 and £8. For more information, contact Maureen Caulson, Booking Secretary, on **0191 251 5892**.

**Newcastle CHA & HF Rambling Club** has been around since 1902 and provides 3 led walks a week on a Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. Walk lengths are between 6 – 11 miles and cover areas such as North Yorkshire, County Durham and Northumberland. They also organise weekends away to places like Keswick, Scarborough and Penrith.

Membership is £7 per year but you can participate in 4 walks before deciding whether or not to join. For more information, contact Pauline Hawdon, General Secretary, on **0191 2668326**.

### **Want to Try a Walk but worried about what to wear?**

Your worries are over! **The National Trust Inner City Project** can lend you boots and waterproofs until you are ready to get your own. They currently offer three different walking groups on alternate Fridays with walks lasting between 4 and 6 miles.

- **Walker Walkers** is for residents living in the Byker, Monkchester, Walkergate and Walker wards of the city. The group meets at Byker Metro at 10 am with every walk costing **£2**.
- **West End Walkers** is for residents living in the Fenham, Wingrove, Benwell and Scotswood, Elswick and Westgate wards of the city. The group meets at Central Station at 10 am with every walk costing **£1**.
- **Pathfinders** is a men-only group open to participants from all over Newcastle. The group meets at Byker Metro at 10 am. Cost **£1** each walk.

For more information, contact Kath Lohfink on 0191 255 7610; she can tell you how to get involved in the project, how to join the walks and about the other potential opportunities open to you (such as map-reading sessions).

### **Wanting more adventure in your life for 2009?**

Then contact Malcolm Graham who is looking for a small group of like-minded people to do adventure activities. He has a 22 foot, 5 berth yacht, which can be used for fishing and sailing up the coast for overnight stays in other ports.

He is also interested in trying hot air ballooning, quad biking, abseiling, visiting places of interest and developing more social activities for the over-50's. If you are interested then contact Malcolm on 0191 **240 3884** or email him at [malasharrock@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:malasharrock@yahoo.co.uk)

## Active Ageing Preview – February Issue:

Look out for details of another **5** new active ageing programme's launching in the spring! This includes

- An incentive scheme offering older people £250 towards the cost of developing an activity programme within their community,
- 'On Yer Bike' is back! The over 50's cycling programme returns - but this time bigger and better 😊.



## Life Long Learning at MEA House

If you are looking for something new to do in 2009, then why not take a look at Leisure and Learning Programme in the Healthy Living Centre, MEA House?

Described recently as a “hidden gem”, they have everything from **Art, Choir, Creative Writing, Creative Crafts, Yoga, Music Appreciation, Tai Chi** through to an extensive range of **dance classes**. When people were asked what they like about the Centre they highlighted the:

- friendly welcoming atmosphere
- excellent range of groups and classes
- fun classes to keep you fit and well
- good facilities and great coffee shop
- pay-as-you-go option

Also on offer are a free internet drop-in and computer classes, including:

- beginners IT – to help you to get started
- E-mail – giving you a new and instant way to keep in touch with family and friends
- the Internet – access to information from all over the world at the click of a mouse!
- Digital Imaging – learn how to improve your digital photographs and scan and enhance old photos
- Genealogy – the next step in growing your family tree

All their classes run from a comfortable IT Suite on the ground floor at MEA House, which accommodates up to 10 students. Classes run every weekday and start at 10 a.m., 11.30 a.m., 1 p.m. and 2.30 p.m.

For more information about any of these programmes, feel free to contact Jennifer Taylor (General programme and IT classes) or Joy Bryant (IT classes) on **0191 235 9914**, they will happily answer any of your questions or help you choose a course that is right for you.

## Healthy Living Centre, Age Concern, MEA House

Why not visit the Healthy Living Centre during December and find out what's on and what is new for January? They are also holding a special fundraising classical concert on **17 December 2.30 p.m. at Durant Hall, Unitarian Church, Ellison Place**, tickets cost **£5**. It will be a wonderful afternoon showcasing some very talented musicians – Ruth Jenkins, Jenny Matins, Elaine Binney and David Venus. For more information visit [www.acnewcastle.org](http://www.acnewcastle.org) Contact Jennifer Taylor on **235 9914** for more information and to book tickets.

## Poetry

### Christmas Cheer by John Reid

Christmas lights are on once more  
Now city streets are all aglow  
Shops are full of Christmas cheer  
As children smile from ear to ear

Parents look for the latest fads  
Yes, the mothers and the dads  
No smoking now for they are out  
However this has come about

City lights are all aglow  
No matter where you may wish to go  
Grainger Market a sight supreme  
As if you are within a dream

Turkeys, chickens, ducks and pheasant  
When cooked will all taste so pleasant  
Fruit and veg – that Christmas cake  
We will all enjoy when we wake

City buskers live and singing  
While Christmas bells and tills are ringing  
Music from a wealth of talent  
Before your very eyes are present

Fenwick window is action packed  
Oliver and company have it cracked  
Stand back parents, let the children see  
Moody at his best for you and me

Remember to call on those in need  
That Christmas card, that thoughtful deed  
To pass a pleasant time of day  
As you may travel on your way



**REMEMBER!** The deadline for articles for the next newsletter is **FRIDAY, 19 JANUARY 2008.**

**REMEMBER!** Return your driving questionnaires in the pre-paid envelope

# Volunteers Wanted

## Were you born before 1943?

A group of researchers at the University of Newcastle are looking for people over the age of 65 to take part in a study looking at food intakes and different types of packaging used on foods you usually consume.

The research team would like you to keep a written record of the foods and drink you consume over four days. There is no need to weigh the foods as they would like to interview you at home to obtain an estimate of the amount of food consumed. They would also like you to keep all packaging where possible of everything you eat and drink during this time. They will supply you with a storage box to keep the packaging in.

As a thank-you for taking part in the study you will receive a £10 gift voucher for Eldon Square. For more information about the study and a recruitment pack, please contact Caroline Shaw on 0191 2227739 or 07725724744.



## Would you please be willing to take part in some research that involves a scan of your brain?



Newcastle University, in association with North East DeNDRoN (the Dementias and Neurodegenerative diseases research network) are looking for volunteers over 60 years old and in good general health to help researchers identify differences in brain structure between well people and those with Alzheimer's disease and Dementia with Lewy Bodies.

Identifying these differences will enable them to identify subtle changes in the brains of dementia patients so that they can offer earlier and more accurate diagnosis and treatment. The study is called 'The Brain Scan Study'.

If you volunteer for the study, they'll ask you to visit the Institute of Ageing and Health at Newcastle General Hospital' – once to answer some questions about your general health and mood and undergo some brief memory tests, and, on a second visit, to have an MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scan.

The timing of the hospital visits for the tests would be at a time convenient for you, and when the MRI scanner is available.

You should expect to be at the hospital for 2-3 hours; refreshments will be available.

If you are unable to use public transport and require transport, please mention this when contacting DeNDRoN to register your interest.

If you would like more information about being a volunteer for the 'Brain Scan Study', please ring Karen Morgan, Josh Wood or Barbara Wilson at North East DeNDRoN on 0191 223 2740 or email: [dendron@ntw.nhs.uk](mailto:dendron@ntw.nhs.uk).

### **Research study in depression**

Researchers at the Institute for Ageing and Health are looking for healthy older people (over 60 years old) who have never had depression to volunteer as control subjects in their study.

You would need to come for two hospital visits, including one for a brain scan, and one for blood pressure monitoring. They would also ask you some questions about your health.

If you are interested, please contact Dr Akshya Vasudev or Dr Alan Thomas on 0191 445 5212.

### **Get on board with St Cuthbert's Care**



St Cuthberts Care is pioneering a new community initiative to provide basic essentials to those people across the region who are in dire need of support.

We are currently operating a weekday, mobile clothing distribution service which visits socially deprived areas of Tyneside and want to recruit volunteers who can spare a few hours during the day to help on the bus to distribute clothes to the impoverished.

St Cuthberts Care also needs volunteers who can help sort the donated clothing at our depot on the western outskirts of Newcastle.

The clothes service is open to everyone but in particular those who are homeless, in temporary accommodation or unemployed.

If you would like to find out more about helping with the project or if you want to donate any clothing, please contact Ken Hitcham at St Cuthberts Care's Head Office in Newcastle on 0191 228 0111 or e-mail him at: [ken.hitcham@stcuthbertscare.org.uk](mailto:ken.hitcham@stcuthbertscare.org.uk).

## Do you ever get bored whilst driving?

A road safety research team from Newcastle University is undertaking a study to investigate the issue of driver boredom. The researchers have developed a questionnaire as part of the study and this is enclosed with this newsletter. Please help by returning your completed form in the pre-paid envelope.



## Spreading the Word

Do you belong to a group that has speakers at its meetings? If so, could a representative from the Elders Council come along

- to describe what we are doing on behalf of older people in Newcastle
- to explain the range of opportunities open to members
- to hear views and ideas on what else needs to be done to improve the quality of life for older people in the city.

**Remember: membership of the Elders Council is FREE**

If your group would be interested, please contact Linda Ward on 2330200 or e-mail at [linda.ward@qualityoflife.org.uk](mailto:linda.ward@qualityoflife.org.uk).

## Can you name these Christmas carols?

1. ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
2. The smogless witching hour has arrived.
3. Exuberating to this orb.
4. 288 Yuletide hours.
5. Sir Lancelot with laryngitis.
6. Leave and do an elevated broadcast.
7. That small hamlet south of the Holy City.
8. Listen, the winged heavenly messengers are proclaiming tunefully.
9. Whose offspring?



*(answers on Page 25)*

## Things to do

### Festive Science for grown-ups

The Centre for Life in Newcastle runs a series of interesting workshops for adults to explore science including subjects such as astronomy, alcohol, DNA, forensic science and cookery.



Science for Grown-ups gives adults the chance to take part in a hands-on science workshop before exploring the Centre for Life and its exhibitions, finishing off with refreshments.

During December, the festive feeling takes over Science for Grown-ups with *A Christmas Star*. Visit the Centre for Life's planetarium, where you'll be guided through the story of the Christmas Star.

The Christmas Star is a central part of the Christmas story, but what was it? Was it really a star, or a comet or a supernova? After the planetarium, there'll be sweet mince pies and hot drinks followed by time to explore the Centre's exhibitions including *Inside DNA*, which explores genetics and the contribution made by scientists based here in the North East.

Julia Hankin, marketing manager at the Centre for Life, says: "Our Science for grown-ups series demonstrates how enjoyable the appliance of science can be."

Each session costs just £5 per person and includes refreshments. To make a booking, please call 0191 243 8223. For up-to-date news on all the other activities at Centre for Life, please check their website [www.life.org.uk](http://www.life.org.uk)

## **A Grand Day Out!**

### **Explore the Centre for Life with pre-school grandchildren**

Earlier this year, the Centre for Life started to hold Pre-School Days to encourage families and carers with young children to spend a day at the centre for a reduced cost. These have proved to be a success with lots of people, including grandparents, enjoying a day of science-related activities that have been designed especially for younger children.

In addition to the usual exhibits, activities include musical workshops with Piccolo Music; minibeast handling; a Toddler Disco with lights, music and bubbles; and 'Touch, Feel, Look and See' science activities. There are also water tables, soft play and other toddler-friendly play opportunities.

The Pre-School Day dates for the New Year are as follows: Tuesday 13 January, Tuesday 3 March and Tuesday 21 April 2009.

Admission costs £3 per adult, and accompanying children aged 4 years old and under are free. Entry to the centre is from 9.30am. To find out more, contact the Centre for Life on telephone number **0191 243 8223**, or visit their website at <http://www.life.org.uk/articles/102>



## **Hard of hearing?**

Then you may be interested in the Newcastle Club for the Hard of Hearing. It's a club that was formed in 1945 as a lipreading club and many of its members were ex-servicemen whose hearing had been damaged during their service in World War One. The club was the first lipreading club in the North East and its members helped in the formation of other clubs in the area, which joined together to form the North Eastern League of the Hard of Hearing. At about the same time, Newcastle members took part in the founding of the British Association of the Hard of Hearing (BAHOH, now known as Hearing Concern).

Few people who wear hearing aids nowadays realise that it was largely due to the efforts of BAHOH its affiliated clubs, and other deaf organisations that hearing aids were and are provided by the National Health Service free of charge.

Continual improvements in the quality of hearing aids are also due to pressure from these bodies.

Members of the club meet at the Quaker Meeting House, Archbold Terrace, Jesmond (across the road from Jesmond Metro Station) on Mondays from 4.30 pm to 7 pm.

The club is for those with hearing problems who can communicate in spoken English and use hearing aids or lipreading.

Their clubroom is fitted with a loop hearing system, and, to make sure that no one is left out, they also have a screen and overhead projector on which the secretary writes things which are said at meetings.

Membership is currently free and tea and biscuits are provided at around 5 pm.

Over the last few years, membership has declined due to illness and deaths and they are now at a stage where they must increase their membership or close down altogether.

If you are interested in learning more, please contact Doug Harrison at [Darisn81@btinternet.com](mailto:Darisn81@btinternet.com) or write to him at Newcastle Hard of Hearing Club, Quaker Meeting House, Archbold Terrace, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 1DB.

# Information

## East End Health: Out and About Stroke Group

East End Health's Out and About Stroke Group, established in 1982, helps to rehabilitate isolated stroke victims, alongside their families and carers. Once a week, group members are collected from their homes, in a specially adapted minibus, and taken to venues of their choice to enjoy lunch, shop and take part in leisure activities. We are currently looking for new members to join the group. For further information, or to join the group, please contact: **East End Health**, 28 Hawthorn House, Heaton Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 1SD, Tel: 0191 276 0595, e-mail: [kate.snowball@eastendhealth.org.uk](mailto:kate.snowball@eastendhealth.org.uk)

## Visit to Grainger Market

During the Grainger Market Festival week members of the Elders Council enjoyed a historic tour with guide, Freda Thompson. Here she is in the middle of the group of members who enjoyed her lively commentary on the history of the market.



## Help is at hand

Once again we went to Disability North's DINEX Exhibition at Metro Radio's Arena, Newcastle, where facilities for caring at home were on site for the public to try before you buy – or possibly gain access to equipment through NHS Loan Department, GP Practice, District Nurse and Occupational Therapists. Access to such equipment can improve the quality of life at home for some people and can give some independence to a person who needs these aids to help support their daily life.

These aids include accessible baths, beds, chairs as well as aids for sensory, hearing and sight loss including various electronic gadgets which can often give a better quality of life and help support a person's independence; and that improves your self-esteem and is an important aspect of life. As people are living longer, support from such aids can help people to live a more independent life.

All of these gadgets and aids go to provide vital support which makes life better for the short- or long-term sick person as well as their carers and can benefit both – whoever pays.

## **Are you or yours missing out on the local news?**

By and large, blind and visually impaired people are able to keep in touch with major news at a national and regional level through radio and TV news bulletins. But what they lack is a means of keeping abreast of more local news items which do not easily find space in such bulletins.

This is where the service organised by Newcastle Talking News comes into its own.

They post to the homes of registered listeners free and postage-free weekly audio-tapes covering local items of general news, plus letters appearing in the Journal and Evening Chronicle correspondence columns on topical matters, as well as news about local arts, cultural and sporting events which do not normally find room in regional bulletins.

The service is provided as part of the local charity Tyne Sound News, which also provides free monthly magazine audio-tapes (Tyne Sound) and audio copies of the popular magazine The Northumbrian. You can also get City Life on audio tape or as a Podcast.

To find out more or register as a listener, you can write to Tyne Sound News, PO Box 614, Newcastle, NE99 4YN or telephone 0191 261 4121 (answer-phone service). They are also always on the lookout for volunteer readers and technical workers; just write or ring as above.

The Elders Council is particularly grateful to Tyne Sound News, for it is their studio that we use to record the audio version of this newsletter.



## **Have your say on Citylife**

The team who produce *Citylife*, Newcastle City Council's free magazine, would like to find out what people think about its look and feel.

The Elders Council Readers Group will be meeting with the team in the New Year to discuss the older-person friendliness of the publication. If you would like to join a focus group session to give your views, please contact Claire Horton on 0191 255 1983; by email at [claire.horton@qualityoflife.org.uk](mailto:claire.horton@qualityoflife.org.uk) or by post using the FREEPOST address given on the front of this newsletter.

### **NHS Choices ...**

... aims to put you in control of your healthcare. The website has been developed to help you make choices about your health, from lifestyle decisions about things like smoking, drinking and exercise, through to the practical aspects of finding and using NHS services when you need them. The integration of the online arm of NHS Direct from October 2008 will provide the site with a single public "front door" to all NHS online information and services. Areas include a Health A-Z, where treatments and conditions are explained in an easy and comprehensive way; a Living Well area, which provides guides, tips and high-quality information on how to live a healthier life; and an area to find local services. The website can be viewed at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### **Martha and Marys Update**



Martha and Mary's is a friendly drop-in centre, where you can call in for a cup of tea or coffee, a friendly chat and a listening ear. It is staffed solely by volunteers and we're now open **every day** from 10.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. You can find us at 212 Chillingham Road, Heaton, so why not call in and say hello?

### **Low income? Phone too expensive?**

If you receive Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance or Pension Credit, BT can cut your costs. Their "BT Basic" scheme costs £4.50 a month (compared to the usual £10.50 a month line rental). This gives you line rental and includes £1.50 worth of calls each month. To apply ring 0800 783 1675.

### **Better information for older people – Information NOW!**

Visit: [www.informationnow.org.uk](http://www.informationnow.org.uk)

or,

**if you haven't got a computer yourself, ask somebody to do it for you – a librarian, a neighbour or a grandchild, perhaps.**

### **More national recognition**

The Information NOW website has been awarded 'Highly Commended' for the *New Media* section of the Association of Social Care Communicators 2008 awards. Officers from Newcastle City Council accepted the framed certificates on our behalf at a ceremony in London in October.

## New employment topic

There is no official retirement age in the UK. Age regulations introduced a default retirement age of 65 but this is not mandatory. Employers don't need to set a retirement age at all. The age at which people choose to retire from work has increased over the last decade, and, with life-expectancy rising, this ultimately means that not only will people live for longer; they are likely to work for longer, too.

Businesses are increasingly recognising the value of older workers as they bring skills, ideas and experience with them, which can also benefit younger workers. It no longer seems to make sense to retire an employee because of their age. All that should matter is their competency to do the job.

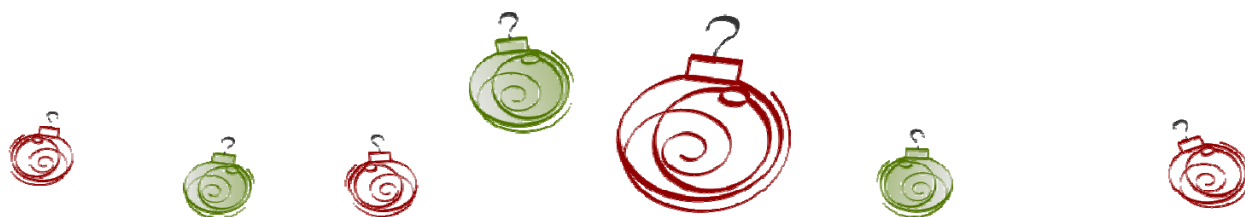
Bearing all of the above in mind, the latest section to be added to the Information NOW website is a topic on employment. This includes a wide range of information on the following:

- Flexible working
- Looking for work
- Problems at work
- Redundancy
- Retirement
- Self-employment

You can look at this new section at:

<http://www.informationnow.org.uk/resources/browse/categories/8>

If there is any information that you, or any of your family or friends, would like to see on Information NOW which isn't currently there, please write to Claire Horton using the FREEPOST address on the front of this newsletter, or email: [claire.horton@qualityoflife.org.uk](mailto:claire.horton@qualityoflife.org.uk).



## Competition time!

To keep your brain cells active, why not use the Information NOW website to do the following quiz. You may even pick up some useful information while you're doing it!

**Top tip:** Try typing key words in the 'What are you looking for?' box in the top right-hand corner of the website page.

1. Name two of the websites we have listed that can help you to switch your gas and electricity supplier.
2. What is the Winter Fuel Payment for 2008/09 for households with one or more people aged 60 -79?

3. What is the name of the Mature Times service for finding friends or relationships?
4. What does NEPRA stand for?
5. Name one of the possible treatments we have listed that can help to treat anxiety.

Send in your answers using the FREEPOST address on the front of this newsletter, or email Claire Horton at the Quality of Life Partnership at: [claire.horton@qualityoflife.org.uk](mailto:claire.horton@qualityoflife.org.uk) .

**Please respond by Friday 19 December 2008 and include your name and contact details, as all responses with 5 correct answers will be entered into a prize draw to win a £15 Eldon Square Gift Voucher.**

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor

On a recent visit to our daughter who lives in Manchester, my wife and I had an opportunity to see a facility which I think would be of interest to many older people. Stemming from a request by a Residents' Association, outdoor exercise equipment has recently been installed in their local park. The residents were first shown a range of equipment and were then asked to pick six that they liked best. The installation, costing £15,000, was arranged by Northwards Housing (the hived-off part of Manchester City Council's Housing Department).

Some of the equipment has moving parts, like the leg press shown. The rest is static but it is all designed specifically with older people in mind. The installation is thought to be the first of its kind in Britain. Would something similar be of interest to Tenants Associations or to Ward Committees?

Yours faithfully,  
Bob Weiner



**Quiz Answers:** (1) The first Noel; (2) It came upon a midnight clear; (3) Joy to the world; (4) The Twelve Days of Christmas; (5) Silent Night; (6) Go tell it on a mountain; (7) O little town of Bethlehem; (8) Hark the Herald angels sing; (9) What child is this?

## **Semi-Retired by Asit Maitra**

**On Thursday I'm up as soon as the radio  
clicks on. I eye the clock closely,  
not let the time slip-pass as it does  
when you're not counting the seconds.**

**I eat a breakfast of cereals, a boiled egg  
that sits on the boat-shaped cup like a funnel.  
I spill coffee; its smell knocks on my neurons.  
Then shave, shower and iron my white shirt.**

**I fasten the ocean-blue tie: my fingers slide it  
round the collar adjusting the end-lengths.  
I use a single knot; pull it tight against my throat.  
I drive to the clinic – engine shakes off its rest.**

**I watch the streets clogged with cars,  
exhaust fumes churning the air, people queuing  
for buses, dashing along pavements,  
a sound-mesh drawn tight over the tarmac.**

**I practice on my clutch and brake:  
like others I've joined the gridlock today —  
my tie-day. I've raised the tie-flag on my ship  
and surrendered to the waves.**

## **An Older Person Friendly Supermarket**

As part of the restructuring of our local hospitals, most of the medical facilities currently on the General Hospital site are being transferred to the other two hospitals. What will remain, however, is the Institute for Ageing & Health (IAH), a world-class research establishment devoted to looking at the ageing process. The IAH is keen that the site should be redeveloped as an age-friendly site and that it should attract commercial partners who are committed to addressing the challenges of an ageing population. One of the redevelopment options is for part of the site to be used for a Tesco supermarket and if this goes ahead, the IAH would encourage Tesco to consider making it the first age-friendly store in Britain.

With this in mind and with support from Tesco, the IAH commissioned Years Ahead (the Regional Forum for Ageing) to undertake a fact-finding visit to Berlin to look at a Kaiser supermarket, which has pioneered age-friendly shopping.

A group, led by Professor Jim Edwardson (Years Ahead Chair), and including Elders Council members Elsie Richardson (who is also Years Ahead Vice-Chair), Pamela Denham and Bob Weiner, visited Berlin in late August in order to see what the store offered to older people.

The group was impressed and delighted with what they found. Before even entering the shop, the tone is set by large notices (*see below*) next to the entrance doors, setting out all the ways older people are catered for. These include:



- Trolleys with built-in seats
  - Broad aisles, non-slip floors, pleasant and non-dazzle lighting
  - Numerous informative notices, magnifying glasses to help read price and product information
  - Clearly identified small and single packs
  - Meat, sausage, cheese and fish counter with specialist advice
  - Extensive choice of fresh, bio- and dietary products
- Facilities for meeting other people, relaxing and finding information in Kaiser's Meeting Place
  - Free phone-call service for a taxi
  - Notices saying, "We are always here for you. Should you require help, simply use the bell at the end of every shelf"

A thorough tour of the store, which confirmed that all the listed features and more were available, also showed that very little, if any, additional expenditure was necessary to make the store age-friendly. Following the tour, the head of Kaiser Berlin, the District Manager and the Store Manager joined the group to answer questions. Questions relating to the financial success of the venture were, of course, of particular importance and the answer to these was that Kaiser had now introduced these older person friendly features to a further 30 of their existing stores.

A study a little while ago, by the Elders Council Older Person Friendly City working group, showed that there was much scope for making the city-centre shops more older person friendly.

It is therefore to be hoped that the information brought back from Germany by this group of older customers will persuade Tesco (and for that matter all the other retailers) to give older person friendly shopping very serious consideration.

The visit received wide and very positive coverage in the local and national press and on television, indicating that there is popular support for such an approach.

## OLDER PERSON SHOPPING

### WHAT NEXT?

DO YOU WANT SHOPPING IN YOUR AREA – AND IN THE CITY CENTRE – TO BE OLDER PERSON FRIENDLY?

THEN COME AND JOIN THE ELDERS COUNCIL TASK GROUP TO SURVEY SHOPPING FACILITIES IN NEWCASTLE AND HELP TO PERSUADE RETAILERS TO MAKE SOME CHANGES.

Please register your interest by phoning the Elders Council office on 0191 2551988

We will arrange a get-together and contact you

**And Finally**



### **Are you an older person thinking about returning to Ireland?**

Although based in Co. Mayo, Safe-Home is a national organisation that seeks to assist older Irish-born emigrants to return to their homeland. They work to secure housing in the voluntary sector (in housing specifically for the older person) for applicants as near to their home place as possible all over Ireland. There are criteria for applicants: they must be aged close to or over 60 years, and must be seeking to return to their county of origin or a county they have close, verifiable links with.

However, returning to Ireland is an enormous step so they will give information about coming home to anyone who would like to receive it, whether they meet the criteria or not. Their information pack deals with pensions, benefits, the Irish health-care system, Irish benefits available to the older person, which British benefits will transfer and which won't, housing, driving, tax and much else.

If you would like to receive information or apply to the programme, contact: The Safe-Home Programme, tel: 00 353 98 36036; fax: 00 353 98 36037 email: [safehomeireland@eircom.net](mailto:safehomeireland@eircom.net) website: [www.safehomeireland.com](http://www.safehomeireland.com)

This newsletter is also available on audio tape. Please contact the office on 2330200 for a copy.

