



# The Elders Council of Newcastle

Older People working for Older People

November 2011 - Issue 44

## Elders Council of Newcastle

Contact Details:

Elders Council of  
Newcastle,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor,  
MEA House,  
Ellison Place,  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 8XS

Tel: 0191 233 0200

Fax: 0191 260 5307

Email:  
info@qualityoflife.org.uk

Website:  
www.elderscouncil.org.uk  
Registered Charity  
No. 1122424



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

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

## Is Newcastle an Age-Friendly City?

At the end of September, the World Health Organisation (WHO) organised an international conference in Dublin on the topic of 'Age Friendly Cities'. There were five delegates from Newcastle, Vera Bolter, Mary Nicholls and Dorothy Ternent (Elders Council), Barbara Douglas (Quality of Life Partnership) and Councillor Ann Schofield (Newcastle City Council).

At the conference towns and cities were asked to sign up to a declaration of support for eight principles of age friendliness. These are:

- Awareness of older people, their rights, their needs, their potentials.
- Developing citizen-centred processes.
- Developing urban and other public places that are inclusive.
- Including housing for older people that is of the highest quality.
- Public transport systems available to older people.
- Promoting the participation of older people in the social and cultural life.
- Promoting and supporting the development of employment, volunteering opportunities.
- Ensuring that community support and health services are available to older people.

Manchester is the only British city to have signed up to

## Is Newcastle an Age-Friendly City – cont. -

these principles so far. But Ann Schofield, the city councillor responsible for older people, has told us that Newcastle is working towards signing; she says that, after a special Policy Cabinet meeting on 9 November to promote active ageing, Newcastle will be in a much better position to become a signatory.

A full report on the conference will be included in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Newcastle already has a great deal of good work to build on in making Newcastle an age-friendly city and the Elders Council has played a leading role in making that happen. Our research on an 'Older Person Friendly City' is one of the few examples of research on this topic led by older people themselves. Our work in Autumn 2010 with

Newcastle's Older People's Strategic Board is cited as a good practice example in the recently published All Party Parliamentary Report on 'Living Well at Home'.



Most recently we worked in partnership with Newcastle City Council's Let's Talk programme to host an event to enable a wide cross-section of older people to work on what makes Newcastle an age-friendly city. This work is a contribution to an on-going dialogue in the city, which includes an event on 9 November bringing together older people and agencies and Newcastle City Council's Policy Cabinet on Promoting Active Ageing.

# Working Group Updates

## Transport and Highways

### Blue Badge Changes

For those who have a Blue Badge Parking Permit you might like to know that there are some changes to it planned for the coming months.

The first change is that a re-designed badge will be issued to anyone applying for or renewing a Blue Badge after 1 January 2012.

Whilst you will continue to apply via your Local Authority, the badge will be printed and sent out from a national centre.

From January, you will also be able to apply for a badge online.

The Department for Transport has also issued new guidance notes to Local Authorities and these are being reviewed for best practice to be applied.

Finally, the Department for Transport have sent a "Model Application" form to all local authorities and Newcastle City Council is looking at this with a view to changing their application form at some time in the future. It is expected that full publicity will be given in the next few months by Newcastle City Council and we will include it in our Newsletter.

In the meantime, further information on the Blue Badge Scheme is available online at [www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/MotoringAndTransport/Bluebadgescheme/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/MotoringAndTransport/Bluebadgescheme/index.htm) or from the Civic Centre, Newcastle.

## Lifetime Homes, Lifetimes Neighbourhoods

### Finding out about the Welfare Reform Bill

At our last meeting, we had a very interesting presentation on the implications of the Welfare Reform Bill for people in Newcastle. The proposed changes are significant and will have the greatest impact on working age adults. However, older people are affected by the changes in retirement age, which in turn affects people's entitlement to other benefits such as winter fuel payments and pension credit. Whilst people of pension age are protected from some of the proposed changes to Housing and Council Tax benefits, these will impact on younger people in the communities in which we live and may have an effect on people living in supported housing. Despite the excellent presentations, it was hard to grasp the complexity of the proposed changes and the impact they will have.

Newcastle City Council is giving priority to this issue and held a Policy Cabinet on this topic on 12 October 2011. A copy of the briefing paper is available on Newcastle City Council's website:

<http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/your-council/community-engagement/thinkabout-whats>

A Financial Inclusion Group has also been established to bring together organisations which can provide help and support to people in understanding the changes and managing their finances.

# Working Group Updates

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

**Caring for our future: shared ambitions for care and support** is the title of the latest consultation paper from the Department of Health. The Government is seeking views about priorities to improve the care and support system for adults. In the last issue of this Newsletter we summarised the recommendations about the future funding of social care in the report of the Dilnott Commission. We also expressed regrets that the Dilnott consultation had been limited to funding only and had not considered wider issues in the provision of social care for an ageing population. Now there is the opportunity to comment further on six priorities. These are:

1. Increasing quality and supporting the workforce
2. Increasing personalisation and choice
3. Ensuring that services are better integrated around people's needs
4. Supporting greater prevention and early intervention
5. Creating a more diverse and responsive care market
6. Role of the financial sector in supporting users and carers and their families.

The Working Group will certainly be responding to these points and will be reiterating their views about joint planning of health, housing and care services as the most effective way of supporting people to live independently for as long as possible. Comments are due by 2 December, so the Working Group will be discussing their response before then, but would welcome contributions from readers at any time. Of course, we are still concerned that there should be commitment from the Government to introduce a fairer and clearer system of funding of social care, as recommended by the Dilnott Commission. Consultations should not be a means to delay important decisions!

### **Future of the NHS**

It seems that the Health and Social Care Bill will soon become law, so we need to give full attention to how it will be implemented. For this purpose, members of the Working Group have been studying the NHS North of Tyne Strategic Plan, and the Newcastle Locality Delivery Plan, paying particular attention to the priorities recommended for Older People's Services, and for Patient and Public Engagement. As Primary Care Trusts are phased out, and Newcastle Bridges and Tyne Health (the two GP Consortiums for Newcastle) assume responsibility for commissioning health services, it is important to ensure that they observe the priorities that have been agreed. There has been publicity recently about reductions in NHS services, and about the treatment of older people in hospital. We ask readers to let us know of any first-hand recent experiences of NHS services.

## Working Group Updates

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

#### Caring and Sharing

The Working Group has spent a lot of time recently discussing national consultation papers. We think that it's really important to speak up about issues which may be decided nationally but still affect us all wherever we live. But we do also use our meetings to share experiences and to discuss them with service providers. For instance, at our last meeting we had a lively discussion with the City Council's Carers Lead Officer and described some of the problems of older carers. Readers are invited to join our discussions – or send us your views – so that we can represent the interests of older service users more effectively.

## Working Group Updates

### Communication



#### *Everyone's tomorrow – today!*

If you want to listen to the programme live, tune in to 102.5fm from 2-4 on the first Friday of every month or 10-12 on the following Monday.

And, if you miss either of these slots you can go to: <http://www.elderscouncil.org.uk/audio/> and listen to all our interviews on line.

If you would like to join the team, please get in touch with Steve Whitley on tel. 273 4727 or email [steve.whitley@phoncoop.coop](mailto:steve.whitley@phoncoop.coop).

## Older Person Friendly City

### District Shopping Centres

If you haven't yet returned the questionnaire about your local shopping centre which was included in the last Newsletter – please do so **NOW, WITHOUT DELAY!** We do need to have your views so that we can make sure that they get the facilities in our neighbourhoods that will help us to enjoy the places where we live. If you've lost your copy, please ask the office for a spare. It is timely to be making our views known at the moment because the next round of consultation about the City Council's One Core Strategy and Area Action Plan is taking place now. You may think that this all sounds remote from our daily lives and doesn't affect you – but it does! Because it will influence the way our City develops and how we as citizens move around the City Centre, what

# Working Group Updates

## Older Person Friendly City – cont -

our neighbourhoods are like and where we can shop and find interesting activities. So it's really important to HAVE OUR SAY. At the last meeting of the Working Group there was a report from a delegate to the WHO Age Friendly City Conference in Dublin (see front page). It seemed that Cities which signed up to the WHO Age Friendly City Declaration had experienced advantages in the development of 'age friendly' environments, services, and amenities in their localities. The Working Group would certainly welcome Newcastle signing up to the Age Friendly housing, transport and neighbourhoods (not to mention Age Friendly Hospitals!)

### Progress Reports

The Working Group is concerned to follow up the issues raised by previous pieces of work. It seems that everything we do results in more work! Current concerns are:

- **City Centre:** NE1, which represents businesses in the City, were responsible for summer activities, such as film shows in the street; pocket parks in Grey Street, and Cathedral Square; beach at the Quayside etc. We have told NE1 that we felt these activities livened up the City Centre and could be enjoyed by people of all ages. But we also keep telling them that there should be more publicity for the Use Our Loos scheme!
- **Parks and Recreation Areas:** It seems a long time since we first began suggesting the provision of adult outdoor exercise equipment in parks. There is now a firm promise that there will be equipment in Exhibition Park by Easter time next year. So we shall be organising an introductory event to encourage older people to try out the equipment next spring. Of course, we hope that this will just be the start of a programme to encourage more healthy activities in parks for older adults. *(Henry Lenthall is pictured right trying out exercise equipment).*
- **Supermarkets:** We are still working on ways to influence supermarkets to make their stores more 'older person friendly'. All ideas are welcome.



Please telephone the Elders Council office for information about meetings.

# Reports

## So what's 'co-housing'?

As we live longer, healthier lives our aspirations and expectations are changing. This is particularly true in relation to where we live, not only in respect of the bricks and mortar, but the type of support and companionship around us as we age. As we learn from people's experiences of current retirement housing models such as sheltered and extra-care housing, there is also an interest in exploring other alternatives which are based around people coming together in co-operative models of housing which enable mutual support.

Older people looking to move from a single family dwelling currently seem to have few alternatives other than sheltered accommodation, which is perceived by some as cramped, top-down in its management style and not guaranteeing opportunities for greater companionship or support. There is therefore apparently a significant gap between some older people's needs and expectations and what is actually available in terms of housing and care.

A possible approach to finding the social contact, active ageing and reciprocal care sought by so many older people could be provided by a move into senior cohousing. So what is senior cohousing? An American architect Charles Durrett, who is an authority on the subject, has identified seven defining features:

1. The residents plan the design of the housing development. This brings them together and is the starting point of the community.
2. The design is such as to encourage a strong sense of community.
3. While all residents have their own, private, living accommodation, there are extensive common facilities. (These can be used for community meals and shared amenities like laundries, heating systems, guest rooms and transport)
4. The site is managed by the residents.
5. The decision-making is shared and not hierarchical.
6. Residents have their own primary incomes and the community does not generate income.
7. There are careful agreements between residents about co-care and its limits.

A number of cohousing communities have been established in Britain and further information on the topic is available on [www.cohousing.org.uk](http://www.cohousing.org.uk)

Having recognised the potential of senior cohousing, the University of Newcastle has recently secured funding to look at the possibilities that cohousing offers local older people. The research will be carried out jointly with the Quality of Life Partnership, and Elders Council members can expect to be invited to workshops to explore their views and suggestions.

# Information

## Winter wrapped up

Age UK have published a guide to keeping warm and healthy in winter. Here are a few of their tips.

Cold weather means the beginning of the flu season and can cause particular difficulties if you have breathing and circulation problems. To help you stay well, it's important to keep warm at home and outdoors, follow as healthy a lifestyle as you can and have a flu jab.

### Stay moving

Keeping active generates heat and helps to keep you warm. It's good for general fitness and well-being too. So when you're indoors, try not to sit still for more than an hour. Get up and walk around, make yourself a warm drink, and spread any chores throughout the day. Chair-based exercises and simply moving your arms and legs and wiggling your toes are helpful if walking is difficult.

### Eat well

Hot meals and drinks help keep you warm, so eat at least one hot meal and have hot drinks during the day. Include a good range of foods in your diet and aim for five portions of fruit and vegetables each day so that you're getting plenty of nutrients and vitamins. Remember that frozen vegetables are as good as fresh. Having a hot drink before bed and keeping a hot drink in a flask by the bed are good ideas, too.

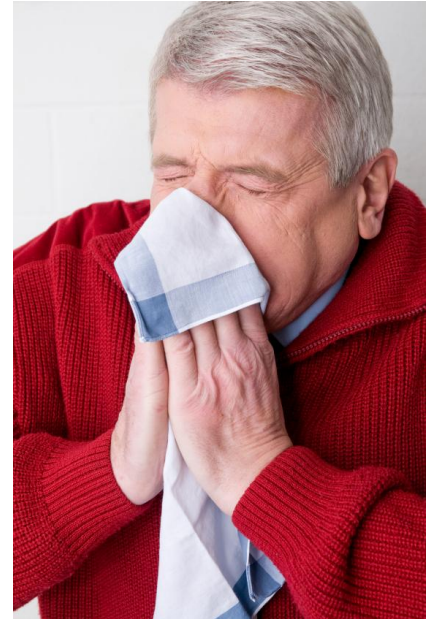
### Have a seasonal flu jab

If you're over 65, be sure to have a [seasonal flu jab](#). Seasonal flu viruses are always changing, so you need to have a jab every year, using the latest vaccine. Flu is not only unpleasant but it can develop into pneumonia, which can be serious. A flu jab is also recommended if you're under 65 with a condition such as diabetes, a chronic heart, lung, kidney or liver problem, have Parkinson's or have had a stroke.

### Keep your home warm

Most of us spend a lot of time indoors in winter, so it's important that you are comfortable and safe. One tip is to close the curtains and fit thermal linings if you can. This will [help to keep the heat in](#).

**For more helpful tips and advice for staying warm and healthy this winter, download the Age UK guide: [www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/Information-guides](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/Information-guides) .**



# Information

## Alcohol Awareness Week

As part of national Alcohol Awareness Week (14-20 November), north-easterners are being urged to think about the impact that alcohol is having on families. Although more young people are choosing not to drink, there is still a problem here in the north-east, with the highest rate of under-18 alcohol-related hospital admissions in England. We need to support young people and help them make the right choices – and heavy promotion of alcohol by drinks manufacturers is not helping the issue.

Balance, the Regional Alcohol Office, is calling for parents, carers and grandparents across the region to support the campaign. For further information and to support the campaign visit [www.balancenortheast.co.uk](http://www.balancenortheast.co.uk) .

However, we know that alcohol can cause harm whatever our age. A recent report by the Royal College of Psychiatrists said that a third of those who experience problems with alcohol abuse do so later on in life, often as a result of big changes like retirement, bereavement or feelings of boredom, loneliness and depression; but the extent of the drinking is hidden because, unlike younger drinkers, older people are more likely to drink in their own homes.

If you are worried about your own drinking, or about someone you care about, the Drinkaware website – [www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk) – has tips and tools to help you understand how many units are in your favourite drink, what safe drinking levels are, and how to cut down.

## North East Drive Mobility

### . Helping people to remain independent

North East Drive Mobility, based at Walkergate Park, aims to help people retain or regain independence as drivers or passengers. The service is open to experienced and learner drivers, provisional licence holders and passengers with a medical condition or disability which may affect their ability to drive or use a vehicle.

The scheme offers:

- Assessment of driving ability; this takes place on a purpose-built driving track, as well as on the public highway.
- Advice on vehicle adaptations.
- Advice on getting in and out of a vehicle, and wheelchair stowage.
- Specialist driving tuition.
- Information and advice service, including advice on possible alternatives to using a car (e.g. community transport services).

You can refer yourself or be referred by your doctor, therapist, DVLA, Motability or other agencies. For further information, contact North East Drive Mobility or visit the Forum of Mobility website: [www.mobility-centre.org.uk](http://www.mobility-centre.org.uk) or ring 0191 287 5090; e-mail: [northeast.drivemobility@ntw.nhs.uk](mailto:northeast.drivemobility@ntw.nhs.uk) .

# Active Ageing

## Age UK Newcastle is back – Autumn Active Ageing Programme

Age UK Newcastle is launching an exciting new Active Ageing Programme for the autumn, based at three locations in the city:

- Northumbria University Sports Central, Northumberland Road
- Blackfriars, New Bridge Street
- Unitarian Church (Durant and Turner Halls), Ellison Place

Their programme, starting on Monday 17 October, offers something for everyone, and includes physical activity, dance, music, arts and crafts, local history and IT. Classes are provided by experienced tutors and volunteer group leaders.

Most older people accessing the classes do so for:

- companionship and friendship; most people say that this is the most important aspect of why they come along
- a sense of purpose – having people to see and a place to go keeps people motivated and prompts regular attendance
- the opportunity to learn something – learning for pleasure and fun



‘I am a little bit more confident now and try to live a lot more healthily.’

‘Much better than a gym.’

‘It gives me a sense of belonging and a chance to meet people.’

‘It’s my anchor point for the rest of the week.’

‘It has made a huge difference to me following the death of my husband by giving me new friends and hobbies.’

So, if you want a quality experience with the opportunity to socialise and have a “cup of chat”, make new friends and improve your own health and well-being at the same time, please contact the Age UK Active Ageing Team on 0191 235 9914 or Customer Services on 0191 232 6488.

# Active Ageing

## Another way to keep fit!



Following the success of over-50s badminton in South East Northumberland, BADMINTON England and Newcastle Badminton Partnership say that they are teaming up to provide fun, friendly badminton coaching in Newcastle.

These sessions, to be hosted at Centre for Sport, open up opportunities for adults over 50 who want to try badminton for the first time or return to the game. The organisers say that with these sessions you get Level 2 coaching, meet other like-minded people on court, have fun whilst getting fitter and improve your playing skills whether you come alone or rally around your friends.

Sessions run on Fridays from 11am to 12 noon at Centre for Sport Newcastle, starting Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September. Sessions cost £3 with your first session free. There's no need to book in advance; so, if you want to try something new, do not hesitate to get in touch with Lynsey Edwards on tel. 0790 100 5315 or email

[lynseyedwards@badmintonengland.co.uk](mailto:lynseyedwards@badmintonengland.co.uk)

## Report

### Starting up a local group

An Elders Council member has written to us telling of her experiences starting up a local group, so this is for anyone like her who might need a little encouragement in starting activities in their local community centre.

She attended a meeting at her local community centre in April after it had had alterations done and was ready to re-open. At the end of the meeting, a group had been formed that would hopefully be the next committee at the Open Day and AGM of the Centre. There were seven volunteers.

This group met a few times with or without council workers to arrange the AGM and Open Day. They decided that they would have a cake and handicrafts

stall with goods for sale. They also invited the Elders Council to come along and let people know about the work it does. The Local History group also set up a stall. A yoga teacher approached them who was eager to start up a group; also a lady who wished to start a reading group. These were advertised on the Open Day and, as the yoga teacher had advertised a couple of free sessions to attract people, her group has started and is growing to the extent that she is paying for the use of the room, which at present is £10.00 per hour and charging those who attend. There is some talk of her starting a second group. The lady who came forward to start the Reading Group became the Chairman and the

# Report

## Starting up a local group – cont. -

group is growing; members each pay £1.00 per meeting. Newburn Library has sets of books which you can borrow and the group has read a couple of books to date as they only meet monthly and have had some lively discussions. They had a trial games night but have put that on hold at the moment as plans are afoot for a Soup and a Bun lunch followed by games starting in January after some members complete the Health and Safety Course.

They have had a couple of bookings for the use of the room for parties and 'Them Wifies' are doing a course with disabled and people with learning difficulties. They like the place so much they are thinking of booking more sessions.

In conjunction with the Local History Group, the volunteers are hoping to

encourage people to come in and chat about how the area used to be and eventually compile some kind of record.

They are working now on planning some event for Christmas and activities for New Year, if they can get the entertainments licence sorted out; it is hoped to show films and charge a minimal sum as it is difficult for people to get to the cinema due to transport timings; so a mini-cinema on the doorstep sounds like a good idea.

Members of the committee talk to each other often by meeting or e-mails; some of them also meet on a weekly basis to clean the Centre and have a "catch up".

The volunteers all have a positive attitude and with the backing of the City Council they really want to make this work.

## A note for your diary ...

### Self Care Week ...

... will take place between Monday 14 and Sunday 20 November. This year's theme is technology and care at home. There's lots of information on the NHS Choices website including: losing weight, getting fit, stopping smoking, cutting down on alcohol and eating more healthily. An online LifeCheck provides tailored feedback based on age, sex and lifestyle. An A-Z guide lists common conditions such as arthritis and a Long-Term Conditions check enables people to see whether they are getting the right type of care. Opportunities will be taken to promote the week in health and adult social care.

For more information, follow this link:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Planners/Yourhealth/Pages/self-care-week-2011.aspx> .



# Research volunteers needed ...



## Language Research

Research has shown that eye-tracking can give us valuable insight into how we comprehend language. So a researcher at Northumbria University wants to use eye-tracking to investigate comprehension across a range of ages.

In this study participants fill out a short questionnaire, followed by an eye-tracking task in which participants will use a computer (and if you've never used a computer before, that's fine). This will take no longer than 30 minutes. Participants will be paid £3.

If you are over 50 years old, a native speaker of English (given that this is a study on English language comprehension, the researcher is recruiting only native speakers), and have good hearing and visual acuity, please contact Leigh Fernandez by email at [leigh.fernandez@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:leigh.fernandez@northumbria.ac.uk) or by phone on 0191 243 7030 for more information and to arrange a time and date that is suitable for you.

## Are you in good health?



Do you have a spare 45 minutes? If you are in good health, are aged between 60 and 79 and do not suffer from diabetes or arrhythmia, you are invited to take part in a university research study investigating the value of a simple technique that detects vascular disease by shining light through the skin.

The following measurements will be made at the RVI at a time to suit you: height and weight; blood pressure will be measured using a standard non-invasive blood pressure device in both your arms and legs; your pulse will be measured from your fingers, toes and ears; an ultrasound scan will be recorded to look at the arteries in your legs; and a blood test will be done to confirm that you do not have diabetes or abnormal kidney function.

If you or someone you know is interested or needs any further details, please do not hesitate to contact Susan King, Research Medical Technologist, at Freeman Hospital on 0191 233 6161 ext. 26598, or e-mail her at [susan.king@nuth.nhs.uk](mailto:susan.king@nuth.nhs.uk).

## Volunteers needed ...

### The Elders Council and the Spending Cuts

With the spending cuts now in operation, the Quality of Life Partnership has had to reduce the level of administrative support it offers the Elders Council. Making notes of Working Group meetings has consequently become a problem and we are looking for anyone who would be willing to help.



Working Groups normally meet once a month (but not August or December) and meetings usually last about two hours. We should very much like to hear from anyone who would be prepared to come and produce notes of meetings. Knowledge of shorthand is not necessary but it would help if note-takers were able to produce notes electronically.

If you think you might be able to help, please contact Anne on 0191 233 0200.

## Information

### Fuel costs – reduced rates for low income or vulnerable customers

The *Warm Home Discount Scheme* will give an automatic £120 rebate on electricity bills for this winter and the next three winters to those who qualify under the scheme. To qualify, people need to be in receipt of the guarantee credit of Pension Credit on 11 September 2011. The Department for Work and Pensions will try to make sure that you get this discount automatically, but should you miss out you will have to ask for the discount from your electricity supplier. Some electricity customers who don't get the guarantee part of Pension Credit may also get the discount, but it will be up to your supplier to decide who qualifies.



## Keep in touch

Newcastle Disability Forum – teaching of computers at home for anyone with a disability. A qualified tutor can go out to your home and teach you at your own pace. For more information, call Paul Caddle on 285 4556.

# Information

## Action Befriending – Good Company for Older People



**Action Foundation**, a charity set up by City Church to reduce social exclusion and isolation in Tyneside, tell us that they are pleased to be launching their latest project within the city.

**Action Befriending** says that it is a service that aims to improve physical and mental well-being through offering a befriending service to vulnerable, isolated, older people in Newcastle. The service was developed by and in response to older people identifying a gap between current capacity and demand for befriending services.

Their befrienders will visit weekly to offer companionship, share in activities; accompany an older person for a short walk or signpost to other services as appropriate.

The service launched recently with their first group of trained volunteers; they are now receiving referrals and making matches in accordance with shared interests and locality. Action Befriending is a multi-generational project with our volunteers' ages ranging from 24 to 78.

They take referrals from individuals or from any organisation working with older people. The person referred must be over 50 and in need of companionship due to loneliness or social isolation.

If you would like to find out more about Action Befriending, please contact Ruth Humes or Paula Barney on 0191 231 3113 or email [befriending@actionfoundation.org.uk](mailto:befriending@actionfoundation.org.uk) .

## Daisy players and hospital

If you are going into a Newcastle Hospitals Trust hospital as a planned admission, you can contact the ward and ask to take your daisy player in with you. (A daisy player [*pictured right*] is a small gadget that will play a CD.) Other low-voltage battery-operated devices (e.g., e-readers) are also acceptable.

It's also useful to remember that, although you have to pay for TV in hospital, you can listen to radio programmes for free.

You can actually take mobile telephones in with you, but there are restrictions on when and how you use them. We suggest that before going into hospital you check with the nurse in charge. There may be some minor requirements.



# Things to do ...

## Build a Boat!



**From Tree to Sea** is a new intergenerational boat-building project created and led by Newcastle-based boat builder and social entrepreneur Alex Finnegan and supported by the Newcastle Science City Community Science Team.

**From Tree to Sea** leads on from the very successful **ApprenticeShip Project** and aims to raise community aspirations and individual self-confidence through hands-on creative activities, while communicating sustainable environmental, science and technology themes.

The next community boat-building workshops will soon begin within St Michaels Church at the Byker Centre. While the places on this course have now been filled Alex is asking for any elders who would like to be involved in subsequent community boat-building projects to get in touch so that they can visit this build in Byker and get a flavour for what is involved.

Working with underachieving local teenagers and older volunteers, **From Tree to Sea** will fell local trees, saw them into planks, build a 12ft sailing dinghy and go for a sail on the Tyne, then finally plant some oak saplings to complete the cycle.

If you are interested in being involved as a volunteer, please ring Alex on 0797 140 7586 or e-mail [alex@puppetship.com](mailto:alex@puppetship.com) or visit his website at <http://theapprenticeshipproject.pbworks.com> .

No previous experience is required. The project is open to both men and women.

## Poetry

### The Sea

When I was a lass I lived by the sea  
The sound of the waves were music to me  
When a storm came I would stand by the shore  
And listen to the sea thunder and roar

Seagulls screaming in the sky looking for shelter  
On the cliffs nearby

Suddenly a rocket lights up the sky  
A ship's in distress and needs help to survive

A lifeboat is launched  
And heads out to sea  
To rescue the men who are in jeopardy

The seamen are rescued and brought to the shore  
Glad to be alive and home once more

**Margaret Kuzsmicz**

# Poetry

## Wind of Change



Coal for the taking once again  
From North Elswick colliery – just down the lane  
Old colliery awakes from work once more  
Coal to be cleared from its floor

The master plan will show the way  
History will have its part to play  
Colliery quiet now at rest  
But it will soon compete with the best

Coal will leave the Tyne once more  
For use at someone else's door  
History repeats itself good or ill  
Science Central will rise upon this hill

Futures bright upon these acres  
Phoenix will rise whoever the takers  
Thank you Pro Paul Younger for showing the way  
That Science Central its full part can play

Old colliery deep below this site  
Newcastle Breweries brown ales might!  
Drays, horses, barrels, tankers – now all gone  
Clock tower off home 'Ord Arms' Scotswood job done

Thank you Newcastle University – Council too  
For giving the chance of life anew  
Hot water on tap from deep in earth  
Continuous flow for life and its worth

History and changes on these vast acres  
Miners, breweries, workers, industry makers  
This walled estate will live once more  
To lead the world to Science Central's door

**John Reid**

# Things to do ...

## Have you got something for our Gadgies Gallery?

Do you paint, draw, sew, embroider, produce photographs, write poetry or.....? If so, we need your contributions to our 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 for details.

### Some of the current contributions displayed



Display of quilting by  
Anne Wilkinson

Glitter Design by Noah Shanks

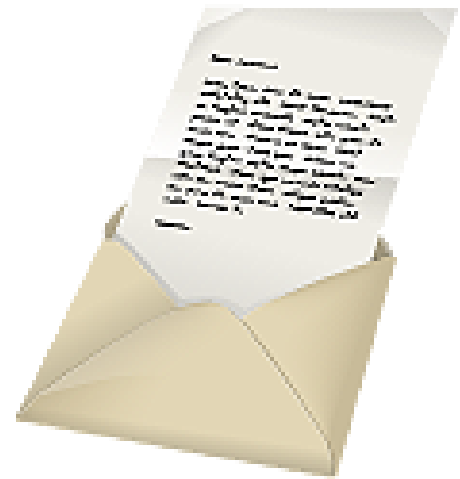


**Editors' Note:** We very much appreciate members' letters. Please note, however, that we reserve the right to edit them before publication.

Dear Editors

## **OVER-80s EXCLUDED FROM BOOKING HOLIDAYS WITH A TRAVEL BUREAU**

Mr Randall of Martin Randall Travel in an interview with the *Daily Mail* has stated that he will no longer be accepting bookings from anyone over 80 because they are too slow and hold everyone up. He says he has had complaints from others when visiting archaeological sites that they hold people up.



This is blatant age discrimination and, although these changes to the Act do not come into operation until April next year, we should still have protection under the Equality Act and in the Human Rights Act under the portion dealing with families because this decision by Mr Randall of Martin Randall Travel Limited will prevent families who want to take their elderly relatives on holiday from picking the holiday of their choice.

I have sent emails to MPs, the Pensions Minister, the Department of Work and Pensions, academics (e.g., Professor Tom Kirkwood), the Director of Age UK and many many others with clout and finally have just heard that Baroness Sally Greengross, Commissioner, and Simon Wilkinson Director of Policy (DWP) are showing an interest.

If this man gets away with this, what next? Ethnic minorities? People with disabilities? Homosexuals? In fact, anyone you don't like. Randall has opened the flood gates and he must be stopped! Please let me have your support and comments.

Yours truly,

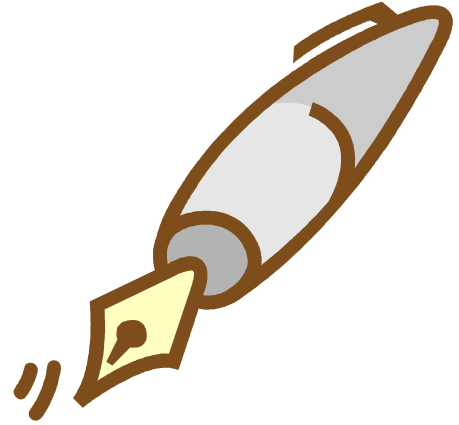
Elsie Richardson

**Editors' note:** The Elders Council takes this issue very seriously. So Mary Nicholls, our Chair, has written to the company and we print her letter on page 20.

# Correspondence

Dear Mr Randall,

I read, with some disquiet, the article in the *Daily Mail* dated October 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 concerning your decision to ban people aged 80 plus from joining tours with your company. If the article is correct, and I'm willing to believe that editorial privilege may have skewed the position of your company, then I'm both disheartened and angry at this blatant form of ageism.



As an older people's organisation, we constantly find that, despite the fact that older people contribute massively in economic terms, currently estimated at £76 billion per year in spending power and £45 billion in tax contributions per year; many people, your company included, appear to think older people are liabilities.

I wonder if you will be applying the same criteria as reported in the press to all other age groups who delay tours or take up the time of the tour leader? For instance, a younger person with a learning disability who needs more time to understand and appreciate the tour; or a middle aged person with an early stage multiple sclerosis who disturbs others with requests for more comfort breaks or assistance in moving? Following the principle applied to older people you should ban all with learning disabilities and any other group with specific problems that may cause some delay to the group and who may need more support.

As I'm sure you recognise it would be ridiculous to make such a wholesale ban as well as breaking equality and human rights legislation. Why then does it appear fair and right to you to take this stance against older people?

Many older people continue to be fit, healthy and independent long after their 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and the trend is that we will all be living even longer lives in the future. It may be that your decision is a poor one given the economic statistics above and the ever increasing life span of people; you may well have to review the whole of your tours in the light of this.

As an older person, I deplore your attitude and the decision you have made. I hope in the light of the many comments you will have received that you take time to review this foolish and discriminating ban.

Yours faithfully,

Mary Nicholls  
Chair, Elders Council of Newcastle

Dear Editors,

## **NEWCASTLE BRAIN TISSUE RESOURCE**

Many thanks for printing our article on brain tissue donation in your recent Newsletter. As you know, it is increasingly important to find ways of maintaining the health and independence of our ageing population and tissue studies are the most effective way to improve understanding and treatment of degenerative brain disease.

We are very grateful to those who have expressed an interest in donation following your article and to yourself and your colleagues for your willingness to help.

Kind regards,

Susan Richardson,  
Research Nurse  
Institute for Ageing and Health  
Newcastle University

A large, elegant cursive script that reads "Thank You". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent 'T' and 'Y'.

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Dear Editors,

I am taking this opportunity to thank you for all the interesting and helpful Newsletters. I've read them over several years.

The format is a great help, my eye sight isn't good!

I would like to wish my very best wishes for your continuing success.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J Benson

# Correspondence

Dear Editors,

It is of some concern that the post office is not catering for the difficulties of the elderly in the matter of undelivered mail (packages and recorded delivery items).

If they cannot deliver at first attempt because the older person is out or stuck in the bathroom, they leave a notice which assumes that the older person is:

- a good walker, or
- a car owner and
- a computer owner.

The plain option is to collect it oneself from the depot in South Street (behind Central Station), which is quite a walk from any bus stop and involves going through a rather intimidating tunnel. If you have a computer, you can ask for a re-delivery, though no day or time can be fixed and delivery times are always uncertain nowadays. Or you can ask for the item to be left at a local post office but there is no choice: the machine gives you a post office based on postcode without regard to its accessibility from your address. It is especially daft if you live on the fringe of your postcode area and the alternative post office is at the other end.

It does not offer the sensible option of a post office near bus stops in the town centre (e.g., Northumberland Street), which would serve older people in most parts of the city. Maybe they are too mean to rent the necessary storage space!

It is probably a national trouble appropriate to e.g. Age UK, but it may be worth your while to have a go at it.

Yours truly,

P. Taylerson

**Editors' note:** We put these points to the Post Office in WHSmith in Northumberland Street and they told us that it was nothing to do with them and that we should write to the main Royal Mail address in London. We wrote in early September but received no reply. Does Royal Mail not care about its older customers' issues?

# Newsletter Information

## Newsletter Articles



If you would like to submit an article to be considered for the January 2012 edition of the Newsletter, will you please ensure that you forward it before Friday 16 December. (Contact details on page 1).

## Newsletter in other formats

We can make our Newsletter available in alternative formats (e.g. in **larger print** or audio tape).



**To request information please contact the office  
(details on page 1)**

## Electronic Version of the Newsletter

It costs about £1 per member to send out this newsletter, so would you be willing to have the newsletter sent to you electronically? If you would, it would save a lot of money every year. So please sign up for this service now by emailing [anne.richardson@qualityoflife.org.uk](mailto:anne.richardson@qualityoflife.org.uk), please put "E-mail newsletter" in the subject box.



Advantages to signing up for this service include receiving the Newsletter at least 14 days sooner than you would normally receive it via the post; getting earlier notice of events happening throughout the city; and seeing the various images in colour.

**What are you waiting for?**

# Gift Aid

As you know from what we said in a previous newsletter, the Elders Council grant this year was not increased by as much as we had hoped. So we need to depend more heavily upon voluntary contributions from our members.

Gift Aid is the easiest way to increase donations to the Elders Council by nearly a third at no cost to you (in fact, if you're a higher-rate taxpayer, you can even claim something back).

## What is Gift Aid?

Gift Aid is a tax relief that is allowed on any money that you donate to the Elders Council. The government treat your charity donations as though you have already deducted basic tax from them, which in turn means that we can reclaim this. So we get the benefit and you lose nothing: the extra comes from the government.

## How does Gift Aid Work?

Gift Aid can apply to one-off donations, or those over a specific period. It can even be backdated for up to six years.

Higher-rate taxpayers are eligible to reclaim 25p from the taxman for every £1 donated to charity by including details of their donations on their Self Assessment form. This rebate can be donated directly to the Elders Council on the same form and, if you so choose, it can be increased further through Gift Aid.

## How can I use Gift aid?

If you would like any future donation to the Elders Council to apply for Gift Aid, please contact Nathan Gulliver for a Gift Aid Declaration Form: 0191 255 1980.

## PLEASE HELP THE ELDERS COUNCIL TO CONTINUE ITS WORK

I wish to donate £5 [ ] £10 [ ] £25 [ ] Other [£ ] to the Elders Council of Newcastle and enclose a cheque for that amount. Please send me a gift aid form.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_