



# The Elders Council of Newcastle

Older People working for Older People

September 2010 - Issue 37

## New Chair of the Elders Council

### Elders Council of Newcastle

Contact Details:

Elders Council of  
Newcastle,  
FREEPOST  
RRAK-YURB-SKGS  
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](mailto:info@qualityoflife.org.uk)

Website:

[www.elderscouncil.org.uk](http://www.elderscouncil.org.uk)



*Pictured: Mary Nicholls, Chair of Elders Council*



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

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

As the new Chair of the Elders Council, I've been asked to write a little bit about myself. Before I do that, I would like to send a huge thank you to Steve Whitley, who stepped down as Chair in June. Steve held the post for four years and his extensive knowledge and steady hand has helped drive the membership forward, brought into action the radio broadcast and kept at the forefront the message that older people count. He's a hard act to follow.

## Elders Council New Chair – cont -

I was born and brought up in the Lancashire cotton town of Burnley. It's most recent claim to fame is in passing Newcastle United last year going up to the Premier League when they went down and this year in the reverse! I'm not a football fan but that's a co-incidence that needed to be mentioned.

From Burnley, I came northwards to do teacher training at Alnwick, living in the castle, though not, I regret to say, in the state rooms; we were consigned to more lowly estate. I've taught in Northumberland, North Tyneside and Lancashire and still call both Burnley and Newcastle "home".

It's almost four years since I retired and, although I really enjoyed my job, I love my retirement and am busy with a whole mixture of activities. The work of the Elders Council takes up quite a lot of time but I know that the Board work tremendously hard for the benefit of all older people. I hope that during my tenure we'll continue to grow in strength and show Newcastle that older people make a great contribution to society, that they are an asset and should be valued as such.

## Working Group Updates

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

Equity and Excellence – Liberating the NHS is the title of a white paper about the future of the NHS published in July. The white paper comes with four Consultation documents on aspects of the proposals, to which responses are required by early October. As older people are major users of the NHS, it is important that we should have our say about any proposed changes. So the Working Group will be trying to understand the implications of the White Paper, at the next meeting on 10 September, (10.30am – 12.30pm, Committee Room, MEA House).

#### What are the main proposals?

- Nationally, an NHS Commissioning Board will commission GPs, dentists, opticians and pharmacies to provide services in each locality.
- Locally, groups or a consortium of GPs will be given the task by the National Board to commission services for their patients. (This will result in the phasing out of PCTs over 2/3 years).
- Public Health will become the responsibility of Local Authorities, who will also oversee health improvement plans, and will support partnership working as well as having a duty to promote the integration of health and social care. (These proposals will result in the phasing out of Strategic Health Authorities).

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

### **How will these proposed changes be implemented?**

- The new groups or consortia of GPs will have some flexibility in how they manage their commissioning role but will still have to operate within a framework set by the National Commissioning Board. There is also a duty to work in partnership with Local Authorities. (The National Commissioning Board will retain responsibility for some regional and specialised services).

### **Who will watch over developments?**

- There will still be MONITORING of the performance of commissioning bodies to ensure that public money is not wasted.
- HealthWatch organisations in each area will take over and extend the role of the present LINKs in promoting patient and public involvement in health and social care.

### **What next?**

- Some (but not all) of the proposed changes will require legislation, so there is no firm timetable for when they will happen.
- There are further White Papers pending, including choice of care for long-term conditions. Work is continuing on NHS Quality Standards, and Transparency in Outcomes – a framework for the NHS (which will replace performance targets).
- A Commission on the Funding of Care and Support has been announced and is due to report in 2011 where there will be a white paper setting the Government's vision for social care.

### **FUTURE OF THE NHS**

The white papers and the current consultation documents raise several questions about what is in the best interests of older people. The present generations of older people can remember the start of the NHS and have lived through several reorganisations and many developments in treatment and care. Recently we have benefitted from reductions in waiting times, for instance, for hip and knee replacements and cataract operations, to name but a few, that keep us mobile and active. But there will be opportunities as well, for example, to work more closely with Local Authorities in integrating health and social care, an issue of longstanding interest to older people. We may also be able to influence developments by participating in HealthWatch (*see following note from Mary Nicholls who was nominated by the Elders Council to serve on LINK*).

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

IF YOU HAVE ANY VIEWS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE NHS AND WOULD LIKE TO BE INVOLVED IN DISCUSSIONS, PLEASE CONTACT COORDINATOR VERA BOLTER by email [verabolter@hotmail.com](mailto:verabolter@hotmail.com) or leave a message on tel. 0191 233 0200.

### “Liberating the NHS – A consultation on proposals”

The Elders Council has representation on the LINK Board (LINK is the Local Involvement Network) this document has some important proposals that will affect LINK and has implications for all of us.

The Government proposes to offer people choice and control and better information and they intend to do this by creating a “more powerful and stable local infrastructure” to be known as “HealthWatch”. This body will act as consumer champions. They will promote patient and public involvement and ask for views on health and social care which they can then feedback to those who commission services. This is very much the role LINK does now; however the new body, HealthWatch, will have additional responsibilities acting as a complaints advocacy service; providing a signposting function and acting as the “Citizen’s Advice Bureau” for health and social care locally.

This is a more demanding role and will require additional funding although it’s uncertain where this will come from. It does seem that at least in principle the voice of older people could be heard and services for older people commissioned if we use HealthWatch effectively.

## Communication Working Group



### *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.

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

# Working Groups – cont -

## Older Person Friendly City Working Group

### Summer Programme in the Parks

“Not much sun, but plenty of fun”, was the verdict of the members who attended the Elders Council event in Heaton Park on 4 August. John Grundy (*of TV fame and pictured below*) opened the event, and later led a large group on a history walk through the park.



Elders Council member, Eileen De-Voy (*pictured below*), got everyone on to their feet



to do some warm-up exercise. There was then a chance to try the other activities on offer, Tai Chi led by South Mountain Chinese Older Peoples Group, Nordic Walking led by a Health Trainer, Rookie Sports to test your coordination, or have a go at bowling. Or there was an opportunity to visit the HealthWORKS stall and have a health check, try your hand at knitting on big needles with textile artist Ingrid Wagner, or

## Older Person Friendly City Working Group – cont -

make a hanging basket with materials provided by Groundworks. Neil Dorney and friends entertained everyone with songs and guitar. Information stalls were provided by Ward Coordinators, Friends of Heaton Park, Age Concern and Elders Council where you could register your views about the event and, most importantly whether you would like to have outdoor exercise equipment in our parks. Thanks are due to the Parks Manager Seamus Tollitt and his team for supporting the event, but above all to Michelle Mordue, Active Ageing Development Worker, for coordinating all the arrangements.



*Tai Chi led by South Mountain Chinese Older Peoples Group*

### *Message from member Allan Robinson:*

*“Hi All,*

*Many thanks for a great afternoon in Heaton Park, hope this is the first of many. Well done to everyone who organised it and took part.”*



*Nordic Walking through Heaton Park*

## ACTIVITIES IN THE PARKS – WHAT NEXT?

Activity days for older people in parks was one of the recommendations in the Working Group's report about parks. So we shall be assessing the results of the Heaton Park event to see if it provides a way to get more people involved in healthy outdoor activities. As readers will remember, the Working Group is also keen to have adult outdoor exercise equipment in parks – so that's why we were asking people in Heaton Park for their views about this, and most important of all, **WHETHER THEY WOULD USE IT!**



*Outdoor Exercise Equipment*

The Working Group would be pleased to hear from members who have any views on this topic – or comments on any events they have attended during the summer. We would like to know what you have enjoyed – or you think could be done better! For instance, several of us joined in a **BIG LUNCH IN THE PARK** at Iris Brickfield Park on 18 July. A great community event arranged by the Friends of the Park bringing people together to share a meal, and to re-create the spirit of the street parties of former times.

## **PLEASE LET THE WORKING GROUP HAVE YOUR SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

Working Group meetings will be held in Committee Rooms in MEA House on:

- 6 October, 10.30am – 12.30pm
- 3 November, 10.30am – 12.30pm

Progress with work on Older Person Friendly Shopping will be one of the main topics for discussion – and action!

Contact Coordinator Vera Bolter on email [verabolter@hotmail.com](mailto:verabolter@hotmail.com) or telephone 0191 233 0200.

# Information

## Benefit Changes

Newcastle Council's Welfare Rights Service tell us that there are going to be a number of changes to the benefits system over the next few months and years. The following are just some of them.

### Retire online

You can now claim Retirement Pension online at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/eservice/>

### Pension and pension-age changes

- Retirement Pension and Pension Credit will be raised in line with the higher of either earnings, prices or 2.5 per cent from April 2011. This will be called the 'triple guarantee'.
- The pension age is to increase to 66. The Government are consulting on when this will happen.
- The 'default' retirement age will be phased out from October 2011 so that employers cannot force someone to retire at 65.

### Help with mortgage costs

From October 2010, help with mortgage interest payments (paid with certain benefits including Pension Credit) will decrease from the current frozen 6.08% to the Bank of England average (currently 3.67%).

### Housing Benefit

There are going to be many reductions in Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowance. Most of these reductions will be starting from next year.

### Tax Credits

Many changes to Tax Credits are planned from April 2011. Notable changes include:

- If you are aged over 60, you may qualify for Working Tax Credit if working for at least 16 hours a week rather than 30 as now.
- The 50-plus element (a one-off payment for new workers over 50) will be removed from Working Tax Credit.
- Raising the withdrawal rate (the amount taken off your tax credit entitlements depending on your income) to 41% from 6.67%.
- Increasing the rate at which tax credits are withdrawn as your household income goes up.
- Lowering the amount of your income not taken into account (income disregard) from £25,000 to £10,000 in 2011-12, and then to £5,000 from 2013-14.
- The period for which a tax credit claim and certain changes of circumstances can be backdated will be reduced from 3 months to 1 month.

**If you want to keep up to date with important benefit changes and issues, then you can sign up for free Benefit Bulletins at Newcastle Welfare Rights website:**

[www.newcastle.gov.uk/welfarerights](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/welfarerights)

# Information

## Housing

Listed below are some key services which may help you if you own or privately rent your home:

**Helping Hand North East** can provide help if you are on low income and cannot afford necessary repairs. Telephone 0191 211 5836 to speak to a local advisor or visit website [www.helpinghandnortheast.org.uk](http://www.helpinghandnortheast.org.uk)

**FirstStop Advice** is an independent, free service providing advice and information for older people, their families and carers about housing and care options in later life. Telephone 0800 377 7070 or visit website [www.firststopcareandadvice.org.uk](http://www.firststopcareandadvice.org.uk)

**Anchor Staying Put** have a range of services and can be contacted on 0191 495 6177:

- ✚ Homesure Service – helps older home-owners with improvements, repairs and adaptations to their homes. The service will support you at every stage with the practical arrangements, funding information and paperwork.
- ✚ The Trades Register helps people aged over 60 years old in Newcastle to find fully vetted tradespeople to carry out repairs and maintenance in their homes.
- ✚ The Small Repairs Service helps people aged over 60 to carry out repairs to their property at an affordable price. They charge a flat fee of £5/hour plus the cost of materials.
- ✚ The Gardening Service is open to homeowners and private tenants aged over 60, or aged over 50 and in receipt of disability benefits.

## Housing for Everyone's Tomorrow in Newcastle

Newcastle City Council and its partners are looking for your views on their Older People's Housing Strategy. The Strategy aims to improve access to services in the home and the surrounding area and offer a better choice of accommodation to older people.

The Elders Council have helped to develop this strategy and will also help to make sure that the priorities in the strategy are achieved.

The strategy is now on the housing strategy section of [www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing). What do you think about the strategy? What do you like about the strategy? Do you think anything has been missed? If you have any comments - please contact Fiona Dodsworth, Housing Strategy Officer on 0191 277 7860 or by e-mail at [fiona.dodsworth@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:fiona.dodsworth@newcastle.gov.uk)

# Housing needs and aspirations of older people in Newcastle – your views are needed!

## Invitation to one of 3 area-based focus groups:

- Tuesday, 21 September, 10.30am–12.30 pm at East End Pool
- Thursday, 23 September, 10.30am–12.30 pm at Trinity Centre, Gosforth
- Thursday, 30 September, 10.30am–12.30 pm at HealthWORKS, Adelaide Terrace, Benwell

Newcastle City Council has commissioned Peter Fletcher Associates (PFA) and Arc4 to carry out an assessment of the impact that it's growing older population will have on the need for housing, care and support services. The work will include assessing the future role and potential of preventative type services to support older people sustain quality of life, independence and wellbeing.

As part of the work PFA will be holding 3 focus groups with Elders Council members living in different parts of the City. We would really like to talk to older people of all different housing tenures, including those who live in rented homes and home owners. We want to speak to people in GENERAL NEEDS housing (housing that is suitable for people of all ages and abilities), rather than those in sheltered housing, as this group is being covered in separate focus groups. For this research to be as representative as possible, we also need to speak to people living in different parts of the city.

The purpose of the focus group is to give you the opportunity to talk about your housing and support needs and aspirations as you grow older. We are interested in talking about:

- Your current accommodation and where you live and the extent to which they meet your current needs
- To reflect on your circumstances if your health or personal situation changes – will your current accommodation still meet your needs? Are there additional support services or changes to your property that you may require to stay where you live now?
- The types of accommodation and support services that you feel you may need and want in the future
- What information is available to guide you in making choices about housing and service and where to go for help and advice

**If you are interested in joining one of our focus groups, please contact Christine Richards on 0191 233 0200. Please note places will be booked on a first come, first served basis**

Everyone involved in the focus groups, will receive a summary of the findings of this research.

# Poetry

## Another Time



This old house stands upon the hill  
To many folks time has stood still  
The passing years have not been kind  
Though great memories are left behind

Gardens, lawns once graced these acres  
Fountains, lake fowl for the takers  
Hunting horns once blew tally ho!  
But that's a long long time ago

Sadly old house now at rest  
Once did compete with the best  
The sounds of jazz – blues and pop  
Coach and four or steam car rolling to a stop



Old house stands five storeys high  
Now silent as the moonlit sky  
One winter's night house cried no more!  
Now ceilings lie where once was floor

Georgian windows once spaced this home  
Ground floor up to flag pole dome  
Flag still assumes its pride of place  
Attic windows with flowing curtain lace

Creaking doors and window frames  
Alas the result of phoenix flames  
Its doors and windows still remain  
Though now no sign of a window pane



Feral cats inhabit this abode  
But house left in another time mode  
Sounds of its past are sometimes heard  
Old house will still have the last word.

**John Reid**

## Research volunteers needed ....



Would you be willing to help in some research? Helen Kendall, of Newcastle University, is researching the domestic food-provisioning and hygiene practices of the over-60s in the North East in conjunction with the Food Standards Agency. She would like volunteers to complete a questionnaire, which aims to assess the variation in life experiences of older adults and goes on to look at their attitudes towards food safety. She will go through the questionnaire with you personally, at a place to suit you (your home, local community centre, coffee shop or the university, for example); it will take about an hour. On completion of the questionnaire, Helen will send you £10 and says that she will be even more generous if you're included in the home study. If you're interested in volunteering or want further details, please contact her on mobile telephone 0783 455 8524.

## Healthy volunteers wanted for Omega-3 fatty acid study

Are you aged 50-70 years and feel like your memory is not as good as it used to be?

We are currently looking for healthy participants to take part in an experiment looking at the effects of a dietary supplement containing omega-3 acids plus added vitamins and plant extracts on mental function, well-being and cerebral blood flow.

You may be eligible to take part if:

- You are aged 50-70 years, and generally healthy
- You do not eat oily fish (e.g. salmon, mackerel, sardines) more than once per month
- You are not taking omega-3 fatty acid (including cod liver oil) or other herbal or vitamin supplements
- You are not currently taking blood thinning, cholesterol lowering (e.g. statins) or antidepressant drugs
- English is your first language
- You are able to attend Northumbria University in Newcastle City Centre for the study sessions

If you are interested in taking part please contact Dr Philippa Jackson on either [philippa.jackson@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:philippa.jackson@northumbria.ac.uk) or 0191 204 8818 who will be actively recruiting until June 2011. Please note you will be reimbursed £50 to compensate you for your time and any expenses incurred, plus a 6-month supply of the study supplement.

# Research volunteers needed ....

## Over 60's Lesbian and Bisexual Women Research Project – Participants Needed

Jane Traies from the University of Sussex is undertaking research aiming to create a comprehensive picture of the older lesbian community in Britain challenging the social attitudes which have made older lesbians invisible. This is believed to be the first study of this kind.

The researcher is appealing for women aged 60 and over who identify as lesbian or bisexual to undertake an anonymous and confidential questionnaire.

The researcher wishes to involve as wide range of women as possible and is particularly keen to reach women over 75, black and minority ethnic women, and those who define as working-class as part of the work.

The questionnaire and more details can be found at [www.womenlikethat.co.uk](http://www.womenlikethat.co.uk) or by contacting the researcher who will be happy to send out a hard copy of the questionnaire (large print is also available) and or discuss the project further:

Jane Traies, LBL Project, Silverstone Building 222 (School Office), University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9RG

Email: [j.traies@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:j.traies@sussex.ac.uk)

Mobile tel. no. or text: 07824 719215 (confidential research line)

# Volunteering

## Friends Action North East



Could you spare two to four hours a week to support an adult with a learning disability to build friendships in their communities? Friends Action North East are looking for volunteer friendship builders who could support people to make and keep friendships.

You don't have to be an expert. Friends Action North East are looking for people who are friendly, reliable, willing to

learn and sensitive to the needs of others. In return they offer their volunteer friendship builders, which is an accredited training programme with continuous professional development opportunities.

For further information telephone 0191 231 4327 or email [friendsaction@gmail.com](mailto:friendsaction@gmail.com) or visit the website [www.friendsaction.co.uk](http://www.friendsaction.co.uk)

# Information

## Organisations for older people living outside of Newcastle

Often members enquire about other older people's forums and organisations located outside of the Newcastle area for friends and family. Below are listed a few:

### **North Tyneside**

Older People's Forum  
Room R6, Linskill Centre  
Linskill Terrace  
North Shields  
NE30 2AY

Tel. 0191 2704254 (with voicemail)  
e-mail: [info@opf-nt.org.uk](mailto:info@opf-nt.org.uk)

### **Gateshead**

Older People's Assembly  
65 High Street  
Felling  
NE10 9LH

Tel: 0191 438 1721  
e-mail:  
[admin.assembly@btconnect.com](mailto:admin.assembly@btconnect.com)

### **South Tyneside**

Forum 50  
Tel: 0191 444 1825

**Wansbeck** Older Peoples Forum  
Tel. 01670 858 688

### **Darlington**

GOLD – Growing Older Living in Darlington

Tel: 01325 388845 email: [gold@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:gold@darlington.gov.uk)  
website: <http://gold.darlington.org.uk/Default.htm>

## Stop unwanted junk mail and phone calls

We've told you before about how to stop people invading your privacy with junk mail and cold-calling. But it meant that you had to approach two different addresses or even pay someone to register for you. Now there's a FREE way to do it: Consumer Focus has set up a website on which you can register to stop these two forms of nuisance. Just go to [www.stayprivate.org](http://www.stayprivate.org).

Of course, we realise that many of our members don't have access to the internet. But someone else can register for this service on your behalf: ask a grandchild or the librarian the next time that you're in the library.



# The Goddess of the Aged

My name is Laura Warwick, I am 23, originally from Chester-le-Street, but have lived in Newcastle for the last 4 years. I have been working with Quality of Life Partnership and Age Concern Newcastle for a year now on a project to improve the design of services offered to older people.

Before taking this job, I had little contact with older people apart from my Grandparents, who have always seemed old to me, although never acted it! Now, having worked with so many inspirational older people, and volunteering as a befriender at Age Concern Newcastle, I appreciate that age is just a number, and anyone can do anything at any age; I can have more in common with people aged 80, than those aged 20.

'The Goddess of the Aged' is a piece of writing I did for my work to demonstrate to people exactly what organisations like Quality of Life Partnership and Elder's Council do and the barriers that they face.

## The Goddess of the Aged

The Goddess of the Aged is Aetatis. She looks over all those at a certain time of life.

Although her name may be 'the Goddess of the Aged', her charge is not defined by an age, or a number, but by an event, an attitude or a need.

When that day comes, she is their support, their guide, their friend. She is their voice, and she is their ear. She is their champion; shouting from the rooftops, using her might to make their voice heard.

Aetatis has many enemies, but her main foes are Perception and Expectation; the two rogue angels who live amongst the people, even amongst her charge. Perception and Expectation work together to convince people that a number defines you, that a number devalues you and that a number kills you. Aetatis is constantly battling against Perception and Expectation.

Aetatis is different things to different people, but always understanding, always helping, always there.

She is as ageless as her charge, and will one day help you all.

# \*\*\*\* Active Ageing News \*\*\*

## Over 60s Swim Sessions



In the last Newsletter it was mentioned that the Government has announced that it will no longer fund local councils to provide free swimming for under-16s and over-60s, however Newcastle City Council has stepped in to ensure that free swimming sessions can continue in swimming pools across the city, despite this loss of the government grant. Details of free swimming sessions for over 60s are listed in the table below:

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
City	10.00-11.00am	10.00-11.00am	10.00-11.00am	10.00-11.00am	10.00-11.00am		
Elswick	1.00-2.00pm	12.00-1.00pm	10.00am-12.00 noon				
East End	2.45-3.45pm	12.00-1.00pm		10.00am-12.00noon	10.00am-12.00noon		
Fenham	All public sessions	All public sessions	All public sessions	All public sessions	All public sessions	All public sessions	All public sessions
Gosforth	10.00-11.00am	4.00-5.30pm family	9.00-10.00am				
Jesmond	All public sessions	All public sessions	All public sessions	All public sessions	All public sessions	All public sessions	All public sessions
Outer West	1.00-2.00pm		7.00-8.00am	3.00-4.00pm	8.30-9.30am		

# Things to do ...

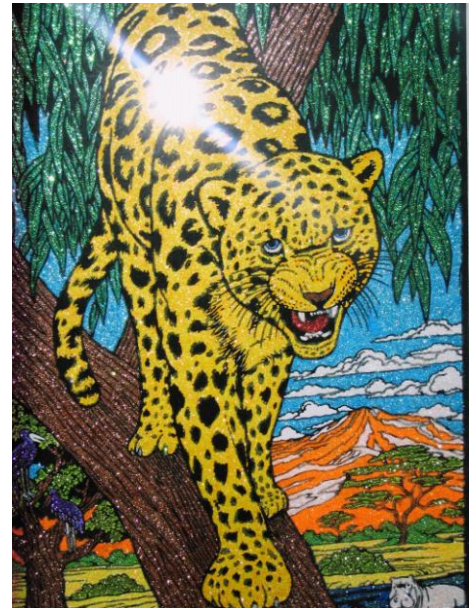
## Have you got something for our Gadgies Gallery?

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:

*Pastel drawing by Alan Robinson*



*Glitter design by Noah Shanks*

## Wordsmiths wanted!

Have you ever thought about how our ways of communication have changed: from handwritten letters to skyping in just a few decades. Do people know how to write letters any more?

We'd like to invite you to join us in a project where we link two groups (older and younger) together as pen pals. Through letters, postcards, emails and texts, we'd share stories and events in our lives, and imagine letter-writers of the past in a fun and imaginative look at communications over the years.

We will be meeting on Tuesday mornings at MEA House starting on 14 September, and hope to have a display of the results in the Central Library later in the Autumn. There will be eight sessions on Tuesday mornings from 10.30am to 12.30pm: 14, 21, 28 September; 5, 12, 26 October; 2 and 9 November. (Note: no session on 19 October).

If you would like to sign up for this project, it is important that you are available for all (or most) of the sessions. If you are interested, please contact Christine Richards on 233 0200 or email [christine.richards@qualityoflife.org.uk](mailto:christine.richards@qualityoflife.org.uk) to book a place.

# Correspondence

Dear Editor,

## **BOOK ABOUT HEALTH-CARE FOR WOMEN IN NEWCASTLE 1800-2000**

I am sorry to say that my proposed book is not going to be published after all. This is because, despite all my efforts and all your publicity in the Newsletter, I received a total of just about 40 contributions, and I needed at least 100 to make a readable book. However, Tyne and Wear Publishing are going to produce a couple of copies of the book to add to the archives at the Central Library, so anyone who is interested can read it there.



As a last favour to me (I am leaving Newcastle next week), might I beg you to put a note in the next Newsletter saying what I have just told you, and giving my warm thanks to those ladies who did contribute their memories?

Thanks again for all your help; it's a shame it didn't work out.

Best wishes,  
Wendy Prahms

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Dear Editor,

In Issue 36, page 14 of the Newsletter- Brake is said to be demanding health checks for older drivers to see if they are fit to drive. I see no need as when a person is no longer fit enough to drive his/her GP or hospital consultant stops him/her from driving!

Yours faithfully  
Patricia Simpson

## **Note from Editor: What do other members think?**

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Dear Editor,

I have just received the July-August issue. I have read through it and find just how helpful you are. I was very pleased to read my letter to you regarding stopping of cheques.

I hope the banks take notice that they are taking choices away from people without giving us any options.

I wish to thank you on behalf of cheque users.

Yours truly,  
Elizabeth Buchan.

# Correspondence



Dear Editor

Why are mobile phones so fiddly?

My wife generously said that she would buy me a mobile phone for my birthday this year. So we started looking for something suitable.

But everything we looked at was so – and there's only one word to describe it – fiddly: tiny buttons and small screen, and minuscule print on both buttons and screen. At one well-known mobile-phone shop, I told the youth behind the counter that I wanted something basic and something that I could easily see and easily manipulate. He told me that he had nothing like that and I said, "Surely I can't be the only older person who wants something simple and easy to use."

"Oh, no," he said. "Quite a few people of your age have the same requirements!"

So why do manufacturers drive faster and faster to miniaturisation and complexity?

Well, I've now found what I was looking for. The buttons are big; the text is legible and situated on a large enough screen; and functions are basic and simple. I've even learnt (with my daughter's help) to send text messages. It's not nearly as complicated as I thought that it would be!

The name of the manufacturer is Doro. They specialise in easy-to-use technology and can be contacted on 0845 011 1160 or [www.matobmobile.co.uk](http://www.matobmobile.co.uk).

Yours truly

Steve Whitley

**Note from Editor:** If you are registered disabled, then you may be eligible to purchase a mobile without paying any VAT. All sight and hearing disabilities are eligible.

Other disabilities are generally acceptable also, but in all cases, you would need to provide a declaration of eligibility to receive zero VAT.

If you are in any doubt as to whether you are eligible to receive goods zero-rated for VAT you should consult Notice 701/7 VAT reliefs for disabled people or contact the National VAT Advice Service on 0845 010 9000

# Correspondence

Dear Editor

## FAWLTY NO LONGER

I recently wrote to you pointing out the stupidity of having a default retirement age (DRA), which allows people to be forced to retire at 65, whether or not they want to. Last week, I was therefore delighted to read that the coalition Government has announced it was abolishing the DRA.



The announcement was met with the predictable chorus of disapproval from employers' organisations and I think it may be worthwhile taking a hard look at the case they are putting up for retaining the DRA. They claim that:-

- It provides certainty and allows planning. *However with the rapidly changing demands of a capitalist economy, planning is very difficult and long-term retirement planning probably impossible.*
- It offers employers an acceptable response to requests to work on. *If someone's work performance is unsatisfactory, they can be told so without the need to hide behind the DRA.*
- Managers will find less 'acceptable' methods of persuading people to retire. *Not much faith in managers behaving responsibly, then?*
- DRA makes space and opportunities for younger employees. *Older employees are very often quite happy to move 'sideways' to less stressful or demanding positions, take up a mentoring/consultancy role or even take on something completely different. Employers would, however, have to think "outside the box" to create these sorts of opportunities.*

A further and little recognised benefit of retaining older workers is that organisational memory is not lost. Some commentators have even argued that the spate of rail disasters that followed privatisation was due in part to the pensioning off of older staff with experience of safety procedures. So the abolition of the DRA is very good news for older people and probably for everyone else too.

Yours faithfully,

Norvell

## Correspondence

**Letter from Mary Nicholls, Chair of the Elders Council:**

### A Taxi-ing Question

Members might like to know that last year we spent a good deal of money (£3,615 in total) providing for taxis to allow members to come to events. We're really happy to do this as we understand the difficulties with health for some of you and do want you to contribute to our activities. However, we are asking you to consider carefully whether or not you really need to have a taxi. Some days, you may feel better than others and you might want to combine coming to an activity with a visit to shops in the city; in that case, getting the bus would be the better option. On another occasion, things may be very different and using a taxi to enable you to contribute to a Working Group or attend an event would be the answer. Some of you may also have a Taxi Card or a Companion Card and could use those to get you to activities or meetings. (For information on these cards, please contact Nexus on 0191 20 20 747).

We are all wise adults and all we ask is that you make a sensible decision in judging "Is your taxi journey really necessary?" (to misquote a war-time slogan).

Mary Nicholls

## Things to do ....

### Make a Difference Day



To celebrate Make a Difference Day, on 30th October, Ouseburn Trust is hosting a Memory Mapping event to record the memories of the local area. Anyone who has memories of the Ouseburn Valley is welcome to join us at the Ouseburn Welcome Centre between 10am and 4pm the starting point for Valley Walks to photograph memory locations. You are also very welcome to pop in for a cup of tea to talk through your memories of the Valley with the team of Ouseburn Valley Volunteers.

**In advance of the event, please contact:**

colette.harrison@ouseburntrust.org.uk if you would like to join the planning team; meetings currently take place on Tuesdays at 3.30pm at the Ouseburn Trust office but please get in touch if you have suggestions for more convenient meeting venues.

# Information

## Communication Tips If you're speaking to someone who's deaf

- Even if someone is wearing hearing aids, always ask if they need to lipread you.
- Make sure you have the person's attention before you start speaking.
- Speak clearly, not too slowly, and use normal lip movements. Use natural facial expressions and gestures.
- If you're talking to a person who is deaf and a person who is hearing, focus on both of them.
- If someone doesn't understand what you've said, try saying it in a different way.
- Keep your voice at a normal level. It's uncomfortable for a hearing aid user if you shout and it looks aggressive.
- Find a suitable place to talk, with good lighting, away from noise and distractions.
- Remember to turn your face towards a person who is deaf. Always turn back to them so they can see your face.
- Check that the person you're talking to can follow you.
- Use plain language and don't waffle



### For more information, contact the RNID Information Line

Telephone: 0808 808 0123

Textphone: 0808 808 9000

SMS: 0780 0000 360

(costs vary depending on your network)

Website: [www.rnid.org.uk](http://www.rnid.org.uk)

# Newsletter Information

## Newsletter Articles



If you would like to submit an article to be considered for the November 2010 edition of the Newsletter, will you please ensure that you forward it before Friday 22 October. (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 60p 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 includes 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 the 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 Matthew Phillips 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: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_