

West Berkshire Neurological Alliance

Representing all West Berkshire people with a neurological condition.

Annual report 2002

Membership this year grew to 24, including 12 charity groups, covering 18 neurology conditions. We are indebted to our Patrons and to all those who gave practical or other support which enabled us to push forward with our work. We are particularly grateful to AJS & Matchless Club for raising £4500 for our Nurse fund, to Berkshire Community Foundation for £1000 towards our survey, and to the Sobell Foundation for their recurring financial support of £1000 p.a. We remain safely solvent and have done well to secure funds to take forward three major projects next year.

The year held a number of successes. We now have definite evidence of the elevated local prevalence of neurology and feel justified in pressing for more investigation into this. We secured approval to survey the health and social care needs of local neurology patients, and recently received the draft results and analysis of stage 1 of this. The published results should help convince local health and social care professionals about the need to fill gaps in services. This will be particularly relevant as the publication approaches, due in 2004, of the National Service Framework for Long Term Conditions.

We compiled a well researched dossier of priorities for neurology patients of those local health and social care issues where we can demonstrate and quantify shortfalls or gaps in services. The detail has been presented to local and regional health and social care managers. In particular we have challenged the low local numbers of Consultant Neurologists, Neuro Surgeons and specialist neurology nurses. We raised proposals to reduce the frequency at which neurology patients occupy hospital beds unnecessarily, through a balanced investment in a range of preventative measures and therapies. Having researched and demonstrated the random provision of specialist neurology nurses locally, we were delighted to be involved in advising on a suitable local staffing structure. We agreed in principle to pump prime a specialist neurology nurse post, an excellent step towards a better neurology service.

We took part in several consultation exercises, a few of which, disappointingly, it was necessary for us to criticise in view of the way they were conducted. Happily, many consultations have been fruitful, best evidenced by the many references to neurology within Newbury NHS Primary Care Trust's Health Improvement Programme. We secured a seat on the Royal Berks. & Battle Hospitals Trust Patient Forum, where we have registered a number of proposals for review. We were present at many PCT Board meetings in Newbury, Reading and Wokingham. We asked many questions of these Boards, which resulted in them discussing many aspects of neurology and allied services which would not have happened otherwise. We developed contacts with the new Thames Valley Strategic Health Authority, emphasising to them our concerns at the lack of structured thinking in many areas of service provision.

Open Meetings have been well attended. We welcomed a number of senior professionals to our discussions. This was invaluable in identifying increasing amounts of common interest and in developing actionable ideas. Plans for an 'Experts together' neurology conference in Spring 03 are well advanced. We are delighted to have secured sponsorship of £5000 from Awards for All and £500 from Charles Lucas & Marshall for this event, where some nationally regarded speakers will lead the day.

Sandra Paget steps down from our Executive, to focus on the new Bucks. Neurological Alliance. Her success in getting this sister group established so quickly is remarkable. We shall work closely with them, and others in the growing network of regional alliances, and look forward to hosting all the UK's regional Neurological Alliances in Newbury in October. Ill health prevented Joyce Parker from taking an active chairmanship for much of the year, but we are delighted she has offered to take the Vice Chairman's role as her chosen route of recuperation into 2003. Thanks must go to all members of the Executive who have worked solidly, and so productively, as a team throughout the year.