

## Annual Report 2006

We operate in an environment of huge uncertainty with major reorganisation taking place in the local NHS. Thames Valley SHA has merged with Hampshire and the Isle of Wight into the South Central SHA and Newbury and Community PCT is being merged with those of Reading and Wokingham to form Berkshire West PCT. All Director and other Board posts on the PCT are in process of being replaced. Local Ambulance Trusts have been reorganised and the Royal Berkshire Hospital has become a Foundation Trust. Inevitably, this means that important decisions are being put on hold, while the new directors and staff familiarise themselves with many current problems, new NHS initiatives and the financial headaches they already face. We will continue to question and lobby these organisations, attending public Trust meetings and by remaining active on patient panels. Our Open Meetings continue to be useful for exchanges with professionals from health and social care.

It is disappointing that the National Service Framework for Long-Term Neurological Conditions has had so little impact nationally, though it is hardly surprising since it has no targets and no budget. With Buckinghamshire we formed the Thames Valley Neurological Alliance to represent patients on the Thames Valley Neuroscience Network but its meetings have been put on hold due to Strategic Health Authority reorganisation and staff changes. Of great concern is the reduction in neurological rehabilitation provision with loss of beds at the Royal Berks Hospital and the pending closure of the Townlands Unit at Henley. This loss amounts to 15 beds. On a more positive note West Berkshire Partnership held a consultation on local neuro-rehabilitation provision in the context of the National Service Framework. A decision has been taken to earmark 5 beds at West Berkshire Community Hospital for neuro-rehab patients and to establish a local Community Neuro-Rehabilitation Team, under Professor Christine Collin. We have nominated representatives to sit on each of the 5 task groups planning these changes.

Carol Allen, West of Berkshire specialist nurse for rare neurological conditions, has now been in post for nearly a year and this pioneering and innovative post seems to be making the impact we expected. An independent impact study by Reading University is under way, and should report in time to allow us to meet our goal that the NHS take over the funding of the post from November 2007. We are most grateful to everyone who contributed to the £90k raised to make this project happen, particularly to local branches of the Motor Neurone Disease Association, British Polio Fellowship and Huntington's Disease Association and several grant-giving Trusts. We are also grateful to other benefactors who have supported the work of Alliance during the year, and especially for the endowment from the late Dr Monica Stewart.

We are delighted to welcome the Active Therapies Partnership as a fully-incorporated sub-committee of WBNA. *Singing for the Brain* sessions, organised by the Alzheimer's Society, have been successful for over two years, providing social, physical and mental stimulation for people with dementia and their carers. We await the result of a bid to the Lotteries Board for additional funding to enable the programme to be extended to include walking and yoga, as well as make it available to those with other neurological conditions.

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We are delighted to have secured £10k to conduct a feasibility study into the idea of a hydrotherapy pool for Newbury/Thatcham, and to have attracted several major partners to the project's oversight. The report should be available for publication before the end of the year.

The programme for our 2007 conference '*Neuro-Rehab 2007 and Beyond*' is at an advanced stage of planning and we look forward to using a larger venue to accommodate the increased number of delegates we expect.

Following the retirement of Dr Nigel Hyman, we are delighted that Professor Christine Collin FRCP has agreed to become one of our patrons. We value our relationship with professionals and are pleased that they continue to consult with us on a regular basis. It remains to thank our President and Patrons for their support and our committee members for all their hard work, and the administrative assistance from Community Action West Berkshire during the year.