

Happy neuro year!

Welcome to our first Newsletter. We hope you find it interesting. If you have any comments on it, please make them known to the Editor.

It's official!

After much burning of midnight oil and some great discussion on democracy we finally adopted our Constitution on 10th November 1999. As a result we are now able to invite members formally to join the Alliance, and membership application forms have been posted. Those of you who need to, please get your Committees to agree to join and forward your fees as quickly as possible as our bank balance is greatly in need!

What's cooking?

We have some very important things in which to continue to involve ourselves.

*the new **Newbury Community hospital** is certainly going to continue to occupy our minds and hearts. We've held several meetings through the course of 1999 with the managers of the existing hospital and they are very keen to continue to talk with us about our ideas for neurological services. We need to continue to develop our ideas and be in a position to respond when we are asked to comment on plans. The work we put in now will have long lasting impact, and the more neurological voluntary groups that take part in this, the more everyone should benefit.

*the under provision of **neuro physiotherapy** provision is something we are actively trying to do something about. Having negotiated that space and equipment is available at Sandford, we have gone a step further and applied for a grant from Berkshire Health Authority for £210,000 spread over 3 years for a team of staff to provide a combination of physio, speech and occupational therapies. We are not sure how they will respond to our request, but as the project is targeted to benefit 500 neurological patients in the area, it is

one of our bigger concerns, and one where it is important to get something moving.

*in addition to making it known that we expect the new Newbury Hospital to be equipped with a **hydrotherapy pool**, we have been looking at 2 other pools with a view to identifying a network across the District which will make it easy for any person with a neurological condition to take therapy without having to travel too far. With small modifications, a pool in Mortimer can be made good, and we believe the owners will be able to get this actioned. We have also found a pool in Lambourn which we can recommend as suitable for those who can take therapy without a therapist, perhaps with the support of a carer. For details please contact the Secretary.

*we have been successful in being mentioned several times in the **local press** through 1999 and have had several articles published in voluntary group **newsletters**. Highly targeted mail shots and personal contacting has also been used to good effect. Our **web site**, currently in the making, will shortly spring into life, adding another dimension to our publicity activity, as well as being one of the ways we can develop our **information service**.

Meetings with key decision makers.

On no less than 7 occasions, senior personnel from the NHS have joined our meetings. There have been a number of other occasions when we have met either formally or informally with these same and other key decision makers. The climate of these meetings has always been positive and it is clear the opportunities to develop a dialogue and make an impact are wide open. Senior influential NHS personnel have requested further meetings with the Alliance, and the future for consolidating relationships next year looks very positive. Looking forwards, we need to build on our informal contacts and strengthen our formal relationships with Social Services in a similar way.

Our President.

We are delighted that Lady Anne Hallifax has agreed to be our President, with her personal interest in neurological conditions, and for the depth and strength of her personal qualities.

Our Patrons.

Between them our Patrons have a wealth of knowledge, expertise and influence. Susan Greenfield is widely regarded as the world's leading expert on the human brain, and, as well as being Professor of Pharmacology at Oxford University, is Director of the Royal Institution. Dr Nigel Hyman is Consultant Neurologist with the Regional Health Authority and is well known for his international research work as well as locally. Penny Lilley is a Chartered Physiotherapist and, as former proprietor of the Lilley clinic, has unrivalled knowledge of the physiotherapy needs of local people. Pam Smith is Professor of Nursing at the University of the South Bank, where research into the treatment of Neurological conditions is her current principal area of activity.

The Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee is currently 4 strong and will meet 6 times a year. Its role is to set priorities within the agreed aims and objectives, to identify the methods to be used to achieve results, and to oversee affairs generally. The Executive would like to see a fifth member appointed, to complete the team. Nominations from the expanding membership would be most welcome.

The Executive Committee comprises; David Roberts, Chairman, Joyce Parker, Vice Chairman, Gillian Hall, Treasurer, and John Holt, Secretary.

Money matters

To finance all this activity we haven't been sitting idly by. Grants have been applied for

from West Berkshire Council and Greenham Common Trust, mainly to cover our start up and annual administration costs. We will find it difficult to do our work effectively unless and until these grants come through, so a lot of other work has gone into compiling and analysing other potential grant providers, so we have a fall back position if necessary. So until more membership

fees, donations, grants or other funds come in we are limited by what we are able to do. All project funding, such as that requested for the Sandleford physiotherapy project, will be kept completely separate from day to day funds.

Join in our Steering Group!

The Alliance has got itself off the ground thanks to the activities of the informal but very hard working Steering Group. It set about the task of finding and exploring the common ground which so clearly exists between our neurological voluntary groups, and defining the aims and objectives the Alliance should follow. The group worked up a Constitution, developed publicity material, identified and canvassed potential members and, as 1999 developed, brought the Alliance to the attention of those who matter. It elected and empowered the Executive Committee and now continues as the general forum for exchange of information and ideas, from which the Executive can drive matters forwards.

Any individual member of any member organisation interested in the work of the Steering Group is encouraged to take part. The next meeting is at 1400 hrs on Wednesday 15th March at 11, Croft Lane, Newbury. Phone Hilary Hinchliffe on 01635 42775 for more information.

Published by:

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