

*20 neurology conditions onboard!*

Welcome to our newest member groups: Alzheimer's West Berkshire, Headway Thames Valley, Berkshire Myasthenia Gravis Association, and Speakability South East. Membership now embraces 20 neurological conditions, a clear message to service providers of our common concern to have the service needs of people with neurological conditions recognised, and a real spur to more progress!

*A minister's blessing*

We warmly welcome Health Secretary of State, Alan Milburn's, press release of 28th February, heralding a new National Service Framework (NSF) for long term health conditions, which 'will have a particular focus on the needs of people with neurological disease and brain and spinal injury'. The NSF 'will include services for people with Epilepsy, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's Disease and other similar conditions'. He aspires that this NSF 'will overcome the lottery in care and ensure health and social services work together....to provide the right level of care and treatment for people with long term health conditions'.

We will take as full a part as allowed in the consultations to ensure its contents are worthy. Publication will not be until 2004/5, as the government will not be making funds available to support it until then! So they know the cost before the NSF is written? Hey Ho!

*Working in partnership*

With particular thanks to Berkshire Public Health Department for their technical input we are now at the pilot stage before launching the

survey into the service needs of neurology patients. The difficult task of counting the neurology patients had appeared stuck, but the latest push on computerisation in the GP's arena now means a first, partial estimate is imminent.

It is clear we will not get a full and accurate count for quite some time. Extrapolating from a newly published paper from our sister Alliance in Lincolnshire suggests there may be 12800 neurology patients in West Berkshire, rather than the 5000 we have projected. Quite a difference when it comes to service planning!

*Therapy at the Sandleford Day Room*

Our bid for a major grant from the New Opportunities (Lotteries) Fund has been referred by them to Berkshire Health Authority's Board, who have given our application their firm written support, for which many thanks. We await the outcome with huge interest. The project will fund a team of specialist neuro-physio, speech & language and occupational therapists working in the Day Room at Sandleford.

*Newbury's new Hospital*

Alliance members have quickly expressed dismay that the approval of the new Newbury hospital is still crawling over the same long list of ancient hurdles. We welcome the brave statements from the new Board of Newbury Primary Care Trust that the hospital will be operational in 2003. We remain concerned at the impoverished nature of the project and the lack of good information, despite West Berkshire CVS working hard with us and others to secure a meaningful consultation process and outcome. The suffering endures!

### *Health Improvement.....*

Jan Evans of Newbury Primary Care Group attended our March Open Meeting and described the re-structured Health Improvement Programme (HImp) process. This includes a more comprehensive set of sub-committees. We firmly believe these changes will help to ensure the needs of neurology patients are not overlooked.

### *.....working with Social Services*

Mark Charters of West Berkshire Social Services also attended our March Open meeting. He described the planned restructuring of social services staff to align closer with the Community Nursing teams. The changes seem likely to serve our members well. We look forward to a smooth transition. Mark also described quality assurance within the care services and responded positively to several suggestions. Thanks to both Jan and Mark for sharing their thoughts and ideas and for listening to us.

### *NHS Plan 'modernise or die'*

In line with the requirement in the NHS Plan for involving the public, Berkshire Health Authority has made its proposals which particularly affect the way they will manage change. A Modernisation Board and Implementation Team along with a number of supporting committees have been proposed, and membership of some of these will include from the voluntary sector. Seeing that information feeds between these structures and our members will be a priority for us.

### *Money doing some good*

The fund-raising team had further success, with grants from Berkshire Community Foundation, Newbury Town Council and Vodafone Group, for which many thanks. With 12 grants having been received to date we have made our first

small grant, towards enhancing the quality and impact of a local speech & language therapy service group.

### *Hydrotherapy*

We would like to remind readers that we have had offers from 2 pool owners for the use of their pools. One, in Lambourn, is for solo use, the other, near Hungerford, is available for group sessions. Please inform your members about these offers and if anyone is interested please contact The Editor for further details.

### *Employment*

The charity 'Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities' asked us if there are projects on which we might team up. At the individual level any reader who needs help in gaining employment because of their disability might want to contact them on 0118 958 6116.

### *Diary dates to note:*

**Please note the following Open meeting dates. All are welcome.**

**24th May.** Guest speaker **Dr Elaine Farmery**, Public Health Consultant, Berkshire Health Authority.

**26th July.** Open meeting. Speaker TBA.

**Both** meetings are at **St Joseph's Church Hall**, Robin Hood Roundabout, Newbury. **Both** are on **Thursdays, at 1400 hrs.**

Our **AGM** will be on **27th September at 1930 hrs** at the Mencap Centre, Enborne Road.

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