

*Neuro nurse fund passes £77,000!*

Readers will be delighted to learn of a further pledge from the Motor Neurone Disease Association (Reading & West Berks.), and for grants from the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy, Orion Pharma and Eli Lilly, which together takes us through the £77k barrier on the way to the £90k needed to establish a local specialist nurse for rare and aggressive neurological conditions. We are on course to advertise the post within a matter of weeks. Anonymous guarantors have generously committed to cover the shortfall, until all the funds are finally collected. We've stepped up efforts to secure the balance, and say a huge thanks to all who have supported us this far.

*Dr Collin looking forward.*

Dr Christine Collin was guest speaker at our June open meeting. Members were able to enjoy a wide ranging exchange with her, giving everyone the chance to pick up on the latest thinking about options for neuro rehabilitation. Dr Collin leads a unique team, delivering a great service, and we all look forward to patients being able to enjoy even better facilities when her department moves to the Royal Berks. hospital site.

*Evidence based neuro practice.*

The National Service Framework for Long Term Conditions will focus on neurology, and now has an allocation of £2million research money, to help those planning neuro services in their decision making. To contribute to the direction of this research, phone the Editor who has a seat on the steering group.

*Consultation on a local health Trust.*

A main aim of our Alliance is *'to encourage the NHS and Social Services to merge their budgets and administrative systems in order to minimise delays in the effective provision of services'*, words that have been in our prospectus since we started. So we are delighted that a formal consultation could soon be announced on the idea of a merger between Newbury & Community Primary Care Trust and West Berkshire Council's Community Care. Of all the options for change, this will surely deliver the best integrated services. We encourage everyone to think seriously about how this proposal will affect them, and get ready to register their opinions and concerns. Our disappointment is that so few health and local authorities are looking at this option. The more people covered by Care Trusts the better!

*Healthcare Commission's faltering start.*

The star rating system inherited by the Healthcare Commission, which tells everyone how well Primary Care Trusts are doing, is to come to an end. Stars are to be replaced by something 'more meaningful'. However, according to its draft plan, it is clear that the Commission is **not** going to achieve what is needed. It intends to continue the desperately bad idea of ensuring that the NHS is excellent at meeting government priorities, ignoring almost everything else is. It does **not** plan to establish whether the NHS is providing a sound service, across the board, all of the time. We awarded CHI, its predecessor, no stars for the way it did its work. CHI has now been abolished. Unless it takes proper stock, how long shall this replacement Commission survive .....

## Conference 2005

We are thrilled that Professor Ray Tallis, the UK's leading figure in geriatric medicine has agreed to be the keynote speaker at our 2005 all day conference on 21st April. With an enlarged hall at Newbury Racecourse and a full line up of eminent speakers, including Professor Kevin Warwick, the man who has taken cybernetics to seemingly impossible frontiers, our conference team is working up another superb neuro education day, to build on the huge success of our 2003 event. 'Action in Neuro rehabilitation is the theme.

We are very grateful to Newbury Town Council for a grant of £500 to help cover the preparation costs. The day will carry education credits and there will be more details in our November issue. Note your diary now!

## Plugging some important gaps

We were delighted that 13 service users and carers turned up to the first ever meeting held in Newbury by Speakability, for people affected by aphasia (speech difficulties). Speech problems arise across the range of neurological conditions and the purpose is to build confidence in communicating. Further meetings will be on 23rd August and 27th September. If you know anyone interested in taking part please call Katy on 020 7261 9975.

We were equally pleased that 30 people affected by ME/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome turned up at Newbury Town Hall on 12th May, International Awareness Day, leaving our team of tea ladies more than a little fatigued. The Council Debating Chamber was a real buzz, and it was clear that some people had been waiting a very long time to have the chance to meet with others with ME/CFS. In the aftermath, Ann Forsythe is the person to contact, on 01344 771 977, between 9 and 1 in the mornings and 7-9 in the evenings.

## Communicating good news

With the help of a £500 grant from ourselves, topped up with their own money, the West of Berkshire Speech & Language service is purchasing software that will help neurology patients to improve their communication skills. In the years to come many people will benefit from being able to use this software. The original source of the funds was Vodafone. Our warmest thanks to them for their support.

## September AGM

Judith Kidd, the first ever Chief Executive of the Neurological Alliance, has accepted our invitation to speak at our AGM. Judith will update us on the new strategic direction and priorities of the national alliance. Another important date to mark in your diary.

## Diary dates to note:

Thursday 30th September. **AGM.**  
7.15 for 7.30 p.m. at Mencap Centre, Newbury  
Judith Kidd, CEO, Neurological Alliance.

Tuesday 12th October. **Open meeting.**  
1.45 for 2 p.m. at St Joseph's, Newbury.  
Speaker from Thames Valley Health Authority

Thursday 9th December. **Open meeting.**  
1.45 for 2 p.m. at St Joseph's, Newbury.  
Sarah Cox. Chronic Disease Collaborative

Thursday 21st April 2005. **All day Conference.**  
'Action in Neuro-rehabilitation', Newbury  
Racecourse. (Pre-booking essential.)

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