

*Neuro nurse recruitment begins!*

Readers will be delighted to learn that a post has been advertised, and recruitment is under way, for a specialist nurse for rare and complex neurological conditions. We have worked so hard to see this happen! The role will be community based, covering the three PCTs of the West of Berkshire. The main beneficiaries will be people affected by Motor Neurone Disease, Huntington's Disease, Myasthenia Gravis, Late Effects of Polio, Multiple System Atrophy, Ataxia and PSP.

Excitingly, further funds have come in to help cover the costs of the two years of pump priming and the impact monitoring. We are most grateful to the David Knight Trust and the Penny in the Pound Fund Charitable Trust for their recent grants towards this post. We are now close to £80k either in the bank or pledged, and are bowled over with the way the fund raising has gone. There's still £11k to go, so we need all of you to be thinking about what you can do to lend your hand, and help get all the funding in place for this pioneering post.

*Conference team is buzzing!*

Things are really heating up at Fred and Molly Davison's, with enquiries and bookings rolling in for our conference on 21st April. The Newbury Racecourse venue, the 'Action in Neuro-rehab' title, the themes of 'Emerging Technologies', 'Therapies' and 'Intermediate Care', and a brilliant line up of speakers really seem to have grabbed delegates' imaginations! If you wish to check the programme look up our Website, [www.wbna.org.uk](http://www.wbna.org.uk) For a booking form or details call Fred on 01635 202605.

Our grateful thanks to Publicity Projects Newbury, Berkshire Community Foundation, Greenham Common Trust, Newbury Town Council and others for their sponsorship.

*A bit of psychology.*

The Healthcare Commission is planning on scrapping the four levels of 'star ratings' currently used to rate NHS Trusts, replacing them with five. 'Not going to make any real difference' we have advised them. They need to consider how NHS Trusts might react following an inspection, if they think they can get a higher rating next time. The risk is a trim of non-assessed services, and further gaps developing. And the likely sufferers? Neuro patients! We'd suggest the Commission bring in a psychologist to advise them, but as there's an 18 month waiting list due to cuts .....

*Long wait nearly over .... ?*

The National Service Framework (NSF) for Long Term Conditions will focus on neurology, and the Secretary of State is expected to announce its contents on 1st March. With the huge amount of consultation that has surrounded the NSF, the needs of neurology patients have perhaps never been so well appreciated so high up. However with a General Election apparently close we must trust that this long awaited announcement will not turn into a political football. We do need fresh thinking!

While there are not enough neuro rehab facilities, neuro patients occupy 20% of acute hospital beds, some unnecessarily, some for too long. This costs the NHS an arm and a leg. Proper investment in preventive services is the way forward.

### *Meanwhile more locally ...*

Sarah Cox, Manager of the NHS's Long Term Conditions Collaborative for the West of Berkshire, was guest speaker at our December open meeting, where members took the opportunity to appraise her of many issues and concerns. Our thanks to Sarah for informing us about the Collaborative and for listening to us. We look forward to providing the Collaborative with more information as long term conditions rise up the NHS agenda.

### *Closer towards a local health Trust?*

We are pleased at reports of recent discussions to merge more local NHS and Social Services budgets. This can only be a good thing. Newbury PCT and West Berkshire Council are to be applauded for pressing along these lines. This is setting the right partnership example for other local PCTs and Councils to follow.

### *Hydrotherapy floated!*

We have a fantastic new opportunity, with AFC Newbury Football Club considering incorporating a hydrotherapy pool as part of their proposed stadium move. We've had meetings with the club on this, and they have some really visionary ideas. Do get in touch with the Alliance if you want to find out more, or wish to be involved in helping to shape the way this exciting new infrastructure facility might be developed.

### *Therapies for the brain*

The Alliance has agreed to put its support and weight behind the 'Therapies for the Brain' project being pioneered locally by the West Berkshire Alzheimer's Society. Their Development Officer, Chreanne Montgomery-Smith has shown the way, and we believe this concept has a huge amount to offer. Pilots have involved 'singing for the brain', and there is a

long list of other activities with the same purpose, such as 'yoga for the brain', 'walking for the brain', and so on. Sounds odd? Well, if you take part, you'll soon see what incredible therapy it is under the right tutelage. We encourage all groups and individuals with an interest in 'brain therapy' to become active supporters of this project.

### *Membership boosted!*

We are delighted to take on board two group members, the Reading Fibromyalgia Support Group, and ASBAH, who help people affected by Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus. Welcome!

### *Local neurologists hit the top.*

Congratulations to both Dr Christine Collin, Consultant in Neuro-rehabilitation, and Dr Ralph Gregory, Consultant Neurologist. Each has been awarded the prestigious title of 'Professor' by Reading University, for their research and academic work. Both are well known to many local neuro patients and other readers of this Neuro Newsletter, and it is great to see their work be given such accolade.

### *Diary dates to note:*

Wed., 4th May (Provisional). **Open meeting.**  
1.45 for 2 p.m. at St Joseph's, Newbury.  
Speaker to be announced.

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

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