

Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy

West Berkshire Council is currently holding consultations on its Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy. This policy includes the Council's rules and strategy for the Disabled Facilities Grant. The deadline for the consultation is 7th July 2006 the outcome will almost certainly have a bearing on the lives of many people with a Neurological Condition.

To enable West Berkshire Neurological Alliance members and those of the West Berkshire Disability Alliance to feed their views into the consultation, the two Alliances will be holding a joint meeting at St Joseph's Church Hall, Newbury, on Thursday 22nd June, 14.00 – 16.00h. For further details please contact John Holt on 01635 33582.

Health checks for carers

The Carers Week Partnership has just completed the largest ever national survey of 5600 carers on the subject of health checks. Nine out of ten felt carers should be offered annual health checks. One in four carers said they had already received a health check and increasingly GPs are providing them. Eight national charities are now calling for statutory health bodies to make annual carer health checks available in each area. The Carers Partnership would like to hear about carers experiences. How did your health check come about? What did you feel were the benefits? If you have any other views about health checks generally, or personally, please respond to paul.matz@carersuk.org or go to www.carersweek.org.

Loss of Neuro-Rehab beds

Following the loss of seven neuro-rehab beds at the Royal Berks Hospital and the impending closure, with loss of 12 rehab beds, at Townlands Hospital, Henley, a thorough review of neuro-rehabilitation services has been carried out by the West Berkshire Partnership. The PCT has agreed in principle to go forward with the proposed changes. This should mean establishing a Community Neuro-Rehabilitation Team in Berkshire West manned with specialist nurses, as well as earmarking five beds for neuro-rehabilitation patients at the West Berks Community Hospital. Interestingly, the neuro-nurse post, at present funded by WBNA, has been included in this plan. However, financial resources for the project have not yet been allocated and there are other pressures on the PCT, not least the recent approval of new and expensive drugs for cancer treatments, which will make heavy demands on resources and affect future financial decisions. We will be watching carefully to see that the facilities are put in place and monitoring developments.

2007 conference programme ready

Planning the programme for our third one-day conference on April 18th 2007 is now almost complete and will include something for everyone. The conference, to be called "Neurological Journeys", will cover both trauma and degenerative diseases, detailing possible interventions, preventions and what it feels like from the patient's perspective. Baroness Susan Greenfield, will talk about neurodegeneration and neuroprotection, Professor Geoffrey Raisman FRS will describe

his pioneering work on spinal repair. Professor Alastair Buchan and Jack Collin will talk about new treatments after stroke. Robert Gifford will explain 'why preventing road accidents matter'. Trevor Powell will talk about cognitive rehabilitation in head injury patients and Professor Christine Collin will describe assisted technologies for motor neurone disease patients. Each of these subjects will be matched by patients and therapists who will describe their experiences. Finally the day will conclude with a debate on the controversial issue of Assisted Dying, with speakers from the Palliative Care Movement and Dignity in Dying. It promises to be a very stimulating and informative conference.

Target for Neuro-Nurse Project reached

Sponsorship for the specialist neurological-nurse post has now reached its target of £90,000. Funding is now complete and an independent evaluation study can be carried out at Reading University. We would like to express our thanks to all who have contributed and especially to John Holt who has been our fund-raiser in chief. John has worked tirelessly to make this project a tremendous success.

All change in the health trusts

The Health Secretary has now formally announced the merger of Newbury & Community, Reading and Wokingham PCTs to form the Berkshire West PCT on October 1st 2006. Thames Valley Health Authority is merging with Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to form the new South Central Health Authority. Further changes come from the merger of the Royal Berkshire Ambulance Trust with Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Ambulance Trusts. There now begins a period of great uncertainty in all these bodies as members of the respective

boards change and staff are required to apply for jobs in the new trusts. Finally, the Royal Berkshire and Battle Hospitals NHS Trust has been given the go ahead to become an NHS Foundation Trust from 1 June 2006. From now on it will be known as the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust.

Charity Pledge Auction

Many thanks to Newbury Rotary Club and to all who contributed to the successful pledge auction. We had 10 pledges in the bidding and have raised a total of £575 to help the work of West Berkshire Neurological Alliance.

Dates for your diary

Our next Open Meeting will be on 13th July 1.45 pm at St Joseph's Hall, Newbury.

Speaker: Sue Bishop,
Matron of West Berks Community Hospital.
Come and join us to learn about the facilities and plans for our local hospital.

Please note the AGM will be on Friday 29th September at 7.30 pm
Venue: Acland Hall, Cold Ash.

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