

Best wishes for 2007

Firstly, we wish all our members and supporters a Very Happy New Year. We start 2007 with a great deal of uncertainty about changes in the NHS. The new Berkshire West PCT and South Central SHA continue with their respective reorganisations and are filling executive posts in the new organisations. It is good to see that a new director for specialist commissioning in South Central (Kendall Bird) has been appointed. Also there is a meeting of the Thames Valley Neuroscience Network being planned for early February 2007. WBNA continues to press for improvements for neurological patients in Berkshire West and we start 2007 with high expectations. Our third conference is at an advanced stage of planning and we have just received the independent consultant's report on the Feasibility of a Hydrotherapy Pool – some details of this are given below.

Hydrotherapy Pool Feasibility Study

As we reported in the previous newsletter, WBNA was awarded a grant of £10,000 from the European Social Fund to investigate the demand for hydrotherapy, and the feasibility of building and running a hydrotherapy pool in the Newbury/Thatcham area. Several local consultancies tendered for the contract which was awarded to Profundus Consulting Ltd, a specialist consultancy dedicated to providing research services and strategic advice.

In the space of three months, Profundus completed a very detailed and independent review of demand for hydrotherapy in this area and provided advice on likely usage, size, location, management organisation and running costs of a hydrotherapy pool. The report concludes: "... we can confidently state that a community hydrotherapy pool for West

Berkshire is a feasible enterprise. There is definitely a strong demand for such a resource....." The full report, *Hydrotherapy Pool Feasibility Study*, extending to some 82 printed pages, was published just before the Christmas holiday.

The report identifies the wide range of people who can benefit from hydrotherapy facilities, including people affected by rheumatism, sports injuries, post-operative, ante-natal and neurological conditions, cancer and many more. It emphasises the importance of the need for a good central location, since many potential users may have limited mobility or find travelling difficult. Based on comparisons with other pools, the report emphasises the importance of good design to make the pool useful to as wide range of users as is possible. If you would like to read the full report, or just the executive summary, you can access both these documents as downloads from the website, [www.profundus.com](http://www.profundus.com).

West Berkshire Neurological Alliance has welcomed the report in a press release.

"Profundus has been very thorough in identifying not only the unmet need, but in showing how a well designed pool, run as a social enterprise, can deliver much needed therapy, charging affordable prices and staying financially viable through the long term. Taking this project through its next stages will involve a lot of organizations and people pulling together and we have the support of many already. This report should convince others that, not only is this a viable idea, it is an important community facility to build into our local infrastructure."

The question now is, where do we go from here? WBNA appreciates that raising funds to buy land and build a pool, as well as

establishing a viable ongoing business plan to run and maintain a hydrotherapy pool, without resorting to help from the public purse, will be a great challenge. However, the feasibility report points out how running a hydrotherapy pool as a successful social enterprise has been achieved in Swindon, where there is a very successful pool run as a social enterprise. WBNA has already formed a partnership with a number of interested parties in West Berkshire to investigate the possibilities.

These groups include: The Greenham Common Trust, Community Action West Berkshire, Social Enterprise Berkshire and West Berkshire Disability Alliance. All have indicated that they will be pleased to see how they can support the project further. In addition, we believe that the feasibility study will be discussed at a meeting of the West Berkshire Partnership Board in January 2007.

We will keep you informed.

### WBNA 2007 Conference

'Challenges Facing Neuro-Rehab' will be the third one-day WBNA conference. It will be held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel, Padworth. The venue has good access and is alongside the A4, only a short distance from Aldermaston Railway Station.

We have continued our collaboration with Professor Christine Collin and Penny Lilley and developed a very exciting programme. The theme of the conference is neurological journeys, where we aim to show the new opportunities for treating and supporting people with a range of neurological conditions, including: head and spinal injuries, stroke and motor neurone disease. As well as describing some of the latest scientific and technical developments we aim to show what it is like from the perspective of the patient and therapist. We shall end the conference

with a debate on an important but controversial subject; 'Assisted Suicide'. Once again we have been able to attract some major national figures to speak at our conference. Professor Keith Andrews of the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability will be our Keynote Speaker. In addition, we have Professor Geoffrey Raisman FRS who is a world class scientist and will talk about his pioneering work on the repair of spinal cord injury. Speakers in the debate will be Deborah Annetts, Chief Executive of 'Dignity in Dying', and Dr Rob George from the Palliative Care Movement. Both these speakers have recently appeared on radio and television and have advised opposing groups in the House of Lords debate on the 'Assisted Dying' (Joffe) Bill. For details of the conference and a brochure, visit our website [www.wbna.org.uk](http://www.wbna.org.uk) or telephone Fred Davison on 01635 202605.

### Diary dates to note

#### Dates for 2007 Open Meetings:

Our first meeting will be on 11<sup>th</sup> January when Graham Rolfe and Judy McCullough will talk about the Expert Patient Programme in West Berkshire. Further open meetings are planned for 8<sup>th</sup> March, 10<sup>th</sup> May, 12<sup>th</sup> July and 8<sup>th</sup> November 2007. Speakers for these meetings will be announced nearer the time. Open Meetings are held at 1.45 for 2.00 pm at St Joseph's Church Hall, Newbury. Free admission includes tea and biscuits.

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