

*From the driving seat ....*

Health Minister Lord Darzi with NHS Chief Executive, David Nicholson, addressed senior NHS colleagues about the major initiative 'Towards a Healthier Future' at Newbury Racecourse on 30th September. Key messages were: 1) There will be many fewer central NHS directives and greater emphasis on local empowerment; 2) No new national targets; 3) Three words that matter are 'quality, quality and quality'; 4) More involvement of clinicians in decision making. Sadly there was no mention of the need to bridge gaps in services and virtually nothing was said about services for those with long term conditions. Driving forces for the NHS remain value for money and accountability so, in seeking to influence NHS service developments, WBNA will continue to focus on these.

*Showing our worth*

The announcement of withdrawal of funding by the Strategic Health Authority for the regional Neuroscience Network resulted in us seeking a meeting with SHA Chief Executive, Jim Easton, to try to reverse the decision. The basis of our argument was that the Neuroscience Network is the most effective forum to develop a consensus vision for service delivery and to drive activities to get a properly balanced, well trained and effective neuro workforce in place. This should enable Commissioners to implement the National Service Framework for Long Term Neurological Conditions.

Our suggestions on how to fund this, leading to better clinical and cost outcomes, seemed well received and we are optimistic the Neuroscience Network will be

back in action soon and following the right agenda.

*Health Network needs you*

The NHS Act (2006 Section 242(1B)) comes into force on 3rd November 2008, placing a duty on all NHS bodies in England to involve users, or their representatives, when planning services and considering proposals for changes in the way services are provided.

In response NHS Berkshire West is setting up a Health Network to engage with patients and the public in shaping local health services. This Health Network is intended to provide it with a wider range of views about local health needs. The network needs to gather your views on healthcare experiences and the services received. This should help it identify the concerns of particular sections of the community – for example people with long-term neurological conditions.

This provides a great opportunity for us to get involved in NHS Berkshire West's decision making. You have a choice about how much time you want to contribute and you can get involved in a variety of ways, such as participating in surveys, public meetings and focus groups etc. We encourage all Alliance members to register their interest. For more information email [ppi.team@berkshire.west.nhs.uk](mailto:ppi.team@berkshire.west.nhs.uk) or call 0118 982 2962/2916

*Watch this space .....*

Now that the PCT has confirmed that its land on the West Berkshire Community Hospital site cannot be made available for a hydrotherapy pool and specialist power-assisted exercise gym, we are pleased to learn that the budding 'Pool & Gym' Social Enterprise has been looking at alternative sites. Neurology clients will only ever make

up only one in six of the users of the proposed hydro pool and gym facilities. It is not surprising to report that many more people than just Alliance members are dismayed that the PCT has isolated itself on this one. We look forward with interest to publication of the PCT's plans for the use of its land at the West Berkshire Community Hospital site.

## 2009 Conference

Look out for information about our 4<sup>th</sup> biennial conference to be held at the Arlington Arts Centre, at the Mary Hare School, Newbury on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2009. Pain will be the subject for this one-day conference: what it is and how we can treat it. Building on the success of earlier conferences, we are pleased again to work with Professor Christine Collin of the RBH and leading neuro-physiotherapist Penny Lilley to plan the programme. We are also delighted that high profile pain consultant Dr Stephen Allen has joined the planning committee. We have expanded our conference team and will be sending out full details of the programme and booking forms early in the new year. Please keep the date free!

## News of Our Members

At the AGM in September the chairman reported 2008 was another successful year. His full report is available on the Alliance website: [www.wbna.org.uk](http://www.wbna.org.uk). We have an 11-strong executive for the coming year and have increased membership to 23 charities and 19 individual members covering some 23 neurological conditions. We welcome as members the Meningitis Trust (Southern Region), and the PSP Association. We also are pleased to report that the newly-formed Reading Huntington's Disease Association has joined us and that we have been able to return a generous donation made by the former Huntington's branch. We are delighted to report that the Reading and West Berkshire Branch of the Motor

Neurone Disease Association has won a national OSCARR award from the national MNDA for its partnership working. The Branch also won an OSCARR award in 2007, a truly exceptional achievement to become double winners. Well done to the entire Branch for providing such excellent services and support to their members.

Headway Thames Valley has now moved to newly-refurbished premises and is making the enforced move into a great new opportunity by providing even better services. West Berkshire Alzheimer's Society was a partner in the winning bid for the £50k Greenham Common Gift. Three partners will work together and provide a vehicle, driver and transport co-ordination to enable carers and their cared for to improve their health and well-being in the rural areas of West Berkshire. We also are pleased to report that Newbury & District MS Society's new minibus is clocking up more miles than ever.

## Diary dates to note

Our last Open Meeting for 2008 will be held on November 13<sup>th</sup> when the speaker will be Duncan Goodes of South Central SHA. He will talk about the recent report on the NHS from Lord Darzi and its implications for the future of the NHS.

Open meetings in 2009 will be held on January 8<sup>th</sup>, March 5<sup>th</sup>, May 7<sup>th</sup>, September 10<sup>th</sup> and November 12<sup>th</sup>. Speakers are to be announced shortly. Open meetings are held at St Joseph's Church Hall, Newbury, 1.45 for 2.00 pm. Free admission includes tea and biscuits.

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