

*A five-year plan for neuro!*

It is with the very greatest of pleasure we can confirm that the Four Clinical Commissioning Groups in Berkshire West have each identified a GP to lead on Neuro. With us also at the table they have met to work up a five-year plan that will drive change and improve the services needed by neuro patients across Berkshire West. The plan should be published in November and will cover short and long term neurological situations, harmonising ways of working and progressively bringing more services closer to the community.

This will be a challenging programme of transformation. Dr Elizabeth Johnston, the GP who drew the team together before standing down to return to GP practice, has been recognised by the Alliance with the citation *'the individual who has done most to improve services for people affected by a neurological condition locally'*.

*Facing up to GP neuro phobia*

The guest speaker at our AGM was Dr Anil Sagar, the GP leading on Neuro in the Reading South CCG. He both astonished and delighted the AGM audience by including in his address that GPs *'must do something to tackle the problem of GP Neuro-phobia'*, (the GP's fear of the subject of neurology)! We congratulate Dr Sagar most highly for such insight, frankness and public honesty. Our research and other

evidence confirms that eliminating GP neuro-phobia will be one of the biggest keys to improving the quality of service that neuro patients need and deserve.

*Executive committee news*

Fred Davison stood down at the AGM, following many years in many leading roles for the Alliance, as Secretary, National Delegate, Conference Organiser and much more. Well done and thank you, Fred, for your dedicated, tireless and truly outstanding work as a Trustee and volunteer!

Fred's departure apart, the serving Executive was re-elected unchanged.

We have a busy year ahead, with further research to do to help inform the local NHS five-year plan, support to give to projects such as West Berkshire Therapy Centre, and a conference to plan for Spring 2016. We are still looking for a Secretary, should anyone with the skills and time be available.

Our contact details are below!

*Focus on rare neuro conditions*

Collectively the prevalence of rare neuro conditions is high but few clinicians have much training in the subject. Recently we used some funds to sponsor some specialised neuro training. In due course that will help local people with rare neurological conditions to receive better support. We are most grateful to our fund raising team, allowing us to support some neuro training in this way.

## *A stronger neuro network*

The Thames Valley Mental Health, Dementia and Neuro Network has a very big agenda, so we are pleased to report that it is about to set up a sub group specifically devoted to reviewing neuro services at the regional level.

This will bring a much better focus on harmonising neuro services across the region. Along with colleagues from Oxon and Bucks we will be part of this group, which must develop a strong agenda urgently and have a structure with real teeth. Among other things, it is vital to get an understanding and a grip on the high level of spending on specialised regional neuro services and to transfer as much of that activity as possible to more preventative services.

## *Migraines and Headaches*

Our Focus Group on Living with Migraine and Headache was another riveting afternoon for our research team. We are most grateful to the attendees who talked in graphic terms about the devastation these conditions can have and the desperate lack of much-needed support. The recommendations arising stand alongside those we have made on many other subjects, for example the need for greater GP knowledge of the condition and what it is really like to have to live with it, along with the need for more consistent and quick referral to expert help.

Recently, Migraines and Headaches have become a local, regional and national NHS priority, so our research is timely. The report will be on our web site soon and is a compelling read for those interested.

## *West Berkshire Therapy Centre*

We remain fully committed to supporting West Berkshire Therapy Centre. Neurological and other clients taking power-assisted exercise there continue to report improved mobility, improved well-being and better ability to carry out the tasks of daily living that everyone else takes for granted.

The Centre is holding an open day on **Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November from 10-4** and an open evening on **Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> November from 3-9 pm**

We recommend that you call in and see how this amazing facility is helping disabled people. Visit:

7, Clerewater Place, Lower Way,  
Thatcham RG19 3RF

[www.westberkshiretherapycentre.org.uk](http://www.westberkshiretherapycentre.org.uk)

## *Your opinion counts*

Healthwatch West Berkshire is conducting two surveys, one for mental health service users, the other for those the Council has assessed for social care needs. The findings will be used to improve local services. To find out more please contact us, details below.

## *Dates for your diary*

### **Open meetings:**

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2014** and  
**Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

St Joseph's Church Hall, Newbury.  
1.45 for 2 pm. Everyone welcome!

## *West Berkshire Neurological Alliance*

2 Clayhill Crescent Newbury RG14 2NP

Tel: 01635 33582 Fax: 01635 569177

Email: [secretary@wbna.org.uk](mailto:secretary@wbna.org.uk)

[www.wbna.org.uk](http://www.wbna.org.uk)

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