

### Peer group support

Our January open meeting showcased the work of the local neurological voluntary sector. A very diverse set of organisations made presentations, starting with newly created Fibromyalgia Support Group, which has attracted seventy members in its first year, confirming that focus and organisation can quickly provide an immense amount of peer group support. That theme then echoed around as other speakers from more established organisations described what they do. Berkshire MS Therapy Centre is a very mature organisation that brings in a staggering £1,000 a day to deliver its high-impact therapy services to people with MS from across Berkshire and beyond. Much newer and rather smaller, West Berkshire Therapy Centre is using advanced engineering technology to pioneer its unique exercise service for all disabling conditions. The Motor Neurone Disease Association provides a high level of family support services. It has several initiatives with other organisations, filling a lot of service gaps that would otherwise persist. Parkinson's UK is particularly active on the information, support and therapies fronts, while Newbury & District MS Society is also very strong on providing transport and respite. The discussion that followed confirmed that many local voluntary groups work very effectively, making a difference 'by people affected by 'XYZ' helping others affected by 'XYZ'. There is nothing like good peer group support!

### Local five-year vision for neuro

The local NHS five-year vision for neurology has been ratified and the first meeting of the steering group is imminent, led by four GP neuro leads, with the Alliance and other key health and social care players fully involved. The five strategic objectives are:

- effective **triage and diagnosis** for patients with new or changing neurological symptoms.
- increasing **patient empowerment** so patients feel more knowledgeable and confident in managing their conditions, are able to access care when needed, and experience reduced feelings of isolation through the voluntary sector.
  - Patients benefit from seamless **integrated care** with the ability for patients to step up and step down, reducing the need for emergency admissions and enabling better care in the community.
- Whether patients are at home, being treated in the community or admitted as an inpatient, they continue to receive **high quality care** with appropriate access to appropriate healthcare professionals.
- A **better understanding of the data**, to better inform service delivery in line with the needs of the local population.

The Alliance looks forward to representing the needs of everyone affected by a neurological condition as this important initiative gathers pace.

## *Grants for carers*

The carers grant funds we announced in the previous Newsletter was fully allocated within five weeks, which helped a lot of carers, but left some others without. We are seeking further funds to try to continue the scheme.

## *Neuro rehab on the move!*

The neuro rehab beds in the Royal Berks Hospital Caversham Ward have now moved to Woodley Ward. Despite concerns there could be problems, we hear that this has not affected any patients adversely, so well done to everyone for managing the move well.

The Alliance is working hard again to see if it is possible to relocate some Reading-based neuro-rehab services to Thatcham, to include a hydrotherapy pool. We continue to press for better access to hydrotherapy because our members and others remind us often about the unmet need and the benefits.

## *Thames Valley update*

At NHS Thames Valley level, a new Strategic Neuro Forum Steering Group is in place, aiming to ensure that neurological service developments are driven in a co-ordinated way across the region. Priorities are still under review.

We have plenty to suggest! To get involved contact John, details below.

## *WBNA Secretary needed!*

We are still looking for a Secretary, should anyone with the skills and time be available. To find out more contact John on [johnmholtbsc@aol.com](mailto:johnmholtbsc@aol.com)

## *WBNA conference 2016*

Planning for our 2016 neuro conference is building pace. The subject will be 'The relationship between Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Neurological Care' and the event will carry Continuing Education Professional Credits for professionals, while also appealing to patients and carers.

## *West Berkshire Therapy Centre*

We are proud to be the principal backer of West Berkshire Therapy Centre, where Neurological and other clients benefit from taking power-assisted exercise. An impact study has been published, describing impressive levels of its clients' improved mobility, well-being and ability to perform tasks of daily living. The Centre has now started an evening service. We recommend that you find out more about this amazing facility. Tel:01635 864561  
[www.westberkshiretherapycentre.org.uk](http://www.westberkshiretherapycentre.org.uk)

## *Dates for your diary*

### **Open meetings:**

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

### **Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May**

Guest: **Aasha Greensmith**, Neuro Commissioner, Berkshire West CCGs

### **Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> July**

*Speaker and theme to be announced.*

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