

Note from the Editor

It's been a tough couple of months for BOPAG with the loss of Chris Boulter in January and then we received the desperately sad news that Patrick Arbuthnot, our Treasurer, passed away suddenly. Patrick was key volunteer for so many groups in the Amersham and Chesham area and through his tireless support he will have touched the lives of so many that he will never have met. It is because of wonderful volunteers like Chris and Patrick and so many of you out there that enable groups to keep running, continuing to help and support people.

The Age UK TV Licence Campaign is doing really well. 75,000 have so far signed the petition and they've received 6000 handwritten cards and 3500 emails for which they are so grateful. Theresa May has been challenged in Prime Minister's Questions and admitted how important the free licences are, however, politicians are not unknown to go back on their word and Age UK will be keeping the pressure on over the coming weeks and months with support from much of the press. If you'd like to support the campaign but haven't yet done so, it's not too late.

I often think that so much of what I put in the newsletter is a bit gloomy so I was delighted to include the utterly heartwarming report on the recent events at Caldicott School (below) and hope that this can be rolled out to other schools.

A few articles on health this month with some interesting developments at Stoke Mandeville and cataract surgery. I'm wondering if any of our readers have benefitted from this rather innovative thinking? And the threat to bus routes does not bode well especially as this is national news and Bucks councillor Martin Tett has been quoted.

Keep smiling everyone!

Andy

A Story Behind Every Face

In collaboration with Contact the Elderly, boys at Caldicott have been working with local elderly residents to discover their stories. They have invited them for tea parties, cake mornings, interviewed them and become pen pals; creating lifelong friendships and connections with a variety of different people.



The *Story Behind Every Face* project was started in PSHEE lessons (Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education). The boys were guided to discover stories from those who have retired. Many people that they

have met have led very interesting lives and this was a great way for them to learn more and appreciate other people within their community.

Throughout the school, the boys found different ways to learn these important stories and they have been amazed at what they have discovered. In Year 3, the boys hosted a puzzle and cake morning where a local group from Contact the Elderly were able to join in. The games were a great icebreaker in building conversation between them both.

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A Story Behind Every Face *continued from page 1*

In Years 4 and 5, the boys interviewed a retired person of their choice. One boy learnt that his grandmother had been kidnapped when she was younger, whilst another found out that his grandad was best friends with Roald Dahl. Year 6 were given the biggest project of all. Each boy was allocated a pen pal and had the opportunity to write to them over the course of three months. There was a real buzz in the classrooms as each day brought new letters and stories.



On Friday 1 February, all boys involved in the project hosted a special *Alice in Wonderland* themed tea party. 70 people were invited to attend and everyone was excited to meet their pen pal. Guests came from the surrounding areas and they had many stories to tell the boys. Individuals, such as an Air Traffic Controller, a race car driver, an ex-headmaster and an Art Director from a famous film franchise, were delighted to regale tales of their childhood, their careers and what happened when they retired. It was a wonderful experience for everyone involved and new lifelong connections were created.

The reason the school spearheaded this project was that with more and more research



showing that loneliness is becoming an epidemic amongst the ageing UK population, it is more important than ever that the younger generation does not disregard people based on their age. As the boys have learnt during this project, the young have a lot to gain from opening their eyes to the value of every member of society.

Head of PSHEE, Noeleen Corrigan said, "This has been a wonderful project for both the



boys and the local residents we have had the pleasure of meeting. The boys have developed an understanding of not only the value of what the older generation have to offer, but also the struggles and joys they have experienced in their lives. With just a little chat, a brief letter, a cup of tea, they have been able to change someone's day. This is a very important thing for the younger generation to understand and our boys have done so well in encouraging this."

The school will continue their partnership with local residents with the hope to create more pen pals and connections for years to come

Andy—My thanks to Caldicott School and Contact the Elderly for this wonderful article



Better Housing
Better Health

Better Housing Better Health



NATIONAL
ENERGY
FOUNDATION

Better Housing Better Health has been commissioned by Local Authorities across Buckinghamshire to help keep residents warm over winter. In a preventative approach to health and wellbeing the free to use helpline provides residents with a single point of contact for services, advice and grants in order to stay warm and well in their homes.

Residents who call the helpline can have their needs assessed over the phone and, where eligible, can be referred for:

- Free LEAP Home Energy Visit
- Energy Bill Discounts
- Grants and funding (for energy efficiency measures such as insulation or new heating systems)
- Other council services and more

The service is mainly aimed at residents with a health condition that can be negatively affected by living in a cold home and households with a low income who struggle to heat their home affordably. But any residents who is looking for free advice on how to keep warm is encouraged to call the helpline. For more information about Better Housing

Better Health please visit www.bhbh.org.uk, or give us a call on our freephone helpline **0800 107 0044**. Our helpline is open Monday to Friday, between 9am and 5pm."



BUCKS FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Southern Group (registered charity 290335)

The Letter of the Law Legislation for Family Historians

A Talk by Dave Annal

The records that we use to research our family history are largely the result of a variety of Acts of Parliament. A good understanding of the legislation behind the census returns, parish registers and civil registration (and many more) can make an enormous difference when it comes to interpreting the information left by our ancestors and how the law impacts your research.

Tuesday March 12th

The Community Centre, Wakeman Road,
Bourne End SL8 5SX

Doors open 7.30 for a start at 7.45pm Every one welcome, members £2.00 non-members £4.00. Ample free parking (after 7pm)



**PENSIONERS'
PARLIAMENT**
11th -13th JUNE 2019

The annual Pensioners' Parliament is widely regarded as one of the most important activities in the pensioner movement's calendar. There is nothing else like it in the country and over the years the event has developed a number of key roles:

- Education – enabling people to find out new information that they can then use in their campaigning
- Networking – offering the chance to get together, share ideas and build friendships
- Debate – providing a forum for people to discuss ideas and have their say
- Rally – inspiring the movement to continue its united campaign on key issues

The opportunity to build a united pensioners' movement, under the co-ordination and leadership of the National Pensioners Convention is what the Pensioners' Parliament is all about.

The 2019 Pensioners' Parliament takes place at the Blackpool Winter Gardens from 11-13 June. Tickets are priced **£10** or **£5** for a day ticket on 11th or 12th. To book visit www.npcuk.org/events or call 020-7837-6622



Chiltern, South Bucks and Prestwood Mini Club Games



On Thursday 21st February, Chesham Leisure Centre hosted the first "Mini Club Games"

The day was aimed to showcase The 50+ and Club programme, and how it has developed over the last three years. The oldest participant being in their 90th year!

The event was attended by Councillor Nigel Sheppard Chiltern District Council Chair, Councillor Jane MacBean Mayor of Chesham and Councillor Doctor Wendy Matthews South Bucks District Council Chair.

Participants took part in five sports:

- Walking Netball
- Badminton
- Table Tennis
- Walking Football
- Wading Water Polo as an exhibition event.



Each participant received a medal and there were trophies for the winning team in each sport as well as one for the overall winners.

Walking Football specifically has become a national (and increasingly international) phenomenon and this slowed down version of the 'beautiful game' has become a 'cornerstone' activity offered every day of the working week across the Better Leisure Centres we operate in Chiltern, South Bucks & Prestwood catering for all levels of ability including a number of members with disabilities, movement restrictions and those who are recovering from serious illnesses take advantage of some



of the Walking Football sessions in our weekly programmes.

Our Better 50+ Table Tennis Club has become incredibly popular over the past 18 months – so much so that we've increased the opportunities to play and have had to acquire more Table Tennis Tables

Walking Netball has also become a feature of each week at both our Chalfont and Beacon Leisure Centres and looks set to challenge Walking Football for popularity. This growth led to the ladies of Chalfont competing as a team for the first time in a tournament on 20th February at Stoke Mandeville and coming home with the trophy!





Bus Routes Under Threat

Thousands of bus routes in England are under threat because councils have said they cannot afford to pay for them. They blamed an "unsustainable" funding gap of £652m in the free bus pass scheme, which local authorities have been forced to fill. Councils subsidise 44% of English bus routes but they warned that, without more funding, these could be cut.

The government said it provides £250m a year to support bus routes and £1bn for free bus passes. Councils are required by law to reimburse bus operators for carrying passengers who hold a free off-peak bus pass, such as the over-65s and disabled people.

The Local Government Association (LGA), which represents councils, said that the gap between government funding for the free bus pass scheme and the actual costs has soared from £200m in 2016 to £652m in 2017/18. That increasingly means they have less money to spend on supporting rural bus services, as well as other optional forms of subsidy such as free peak-time travel for

pass holders, post-16 school transport or support for young people's travel.

The LGA is calling for the government to return to fully funding the costs of the free bus pass scheme in the Spending Review this year. Councillor Martin Tett, the LGA's transport spokesman, said: "Properly funding the national free bus pass scheme is essential if the government wants councils to be able to maintain our essential bus services, reduce congestion and protect vital routes.

"If this is not addressed in the Spending Review it could lead to older people having a free bus pass but no bus to travel on."

The LGA said more than 3,000 routes have already been withdrawn, altered or reduced since 2010/11.

A Department for Transport spokeswoman said: "It is for councils to decide which bus operations to support in their areas, but we help to subsidise costs through around £250m worth of investment every year."

She said that £42m of this sum goes to local authorities and an additional £1bn is used to fund free bus passes.



Fix My Street is an independent website, built by the charity, mySociety. They wanted to make it easier to report problems in the community, even if you don't know who those reports should go to.

All you need to do is type in a postcode – or let the site locate you automatically – and describe your problem. Then they send your report to the people whose job it is to fix it. FixMyStreet covers the whole of the UK.

Bucks County Council have embraced the concept and have been using Fix My Street for some time to allow the public to report problems. There is a significant cost benefit with on-line reporting as each report costs 9p whereas taking a report by phone costs £6.69. But the benefits don't end there. Reporting online allows the user to pinpoint exactly where the problem is via the map.

Further improvements have been made

recently so you can now use the site to report

- Winter gritting issues
- Street light problems
- Fly tipping
- You can see issues reported by others
- Subscribe to issues reported in a chosen area

You can also opt to get text messages to keep you updated on your report. Future improvements planned are to include parking issues.

You can visit the website at www.fixmystreet.buckscc.gov.uk and if you have any feedback or suggestions you can email fixmystreetbs@buckscc.gov.uk

If you do not have access to the internet or the issue you are reporting requires urgent attention you should contact Bucks County Council on 01296 395 000



Are Bucks GPs Using a Private Referral Service?

Referral management systems are used to assess referrals made by GPs. It costs the GP money to refer a patient, so the idea is to save money by avoiding unnecessary referrals. However, research has shown that most of the time this process doesn't save money, and there were also concerns that the patient's recovery hadn't been considered in the assessment.

Healthwatch Bucks asked Bucks CCG whether they use these systems and they said that they do not. However, some GPs use a "peer review" system. This means that another GP will look at the referral and decide whether it is appropriate. This has reduced the number of referrals made, and saved money.

However, on 15th January 2018 a member of the public contacted Healthwatch Bucks regarding The Practice Group. They said that some patients had had their referrals assessed by this private company, despite what Bucks CCG had told Healthwatch Bucks.

They contacted The Practice Group who confirmed that they had a contract with Milton Keynes University Hospital Foundation Trust (MKUHFT) to provide this service. This means that if you were referred to a Milton Keynes service, your referral could be assessed.

Healthwatch Bucks have recently reconfirmed that this is still the case (as of the 24th of January 2019). This is not the decision of your Bucks GP, this is Milton Keynes hospital's process. You should be able to choose where to receive your treatment, so this might be something to consider when doing so.

If you have any concerns about a referral process, service, or any other health care matter, feel free to get in touch, or leave feedback by finding the service in question on their homepage.

You can get in touch with the team at Healthwatch Bucks by phone 01844 348839 email info@healthwatchbucks.co.uk or write to Healthwatch Bucks, 6 Centre Parade Place Farm Way, Monks Risborough, HP27 9JS

Vulnerable People Face Crippling Care Bills

Vulnerable pensioners with dementia and Parkinson's are facing crippling care bills following attempts by health officials to restrict the numbers receiving NHS funding. Under national rules, any patient with a significant health problem should have their care and nursing fees paid in full - if the condition is deemed to be the main reason they need such help.

But an investigation by The Telegraph reveals that authorities are increasingly refusing to fund care, claiming that devastating diseases are not severe, or not the primary reason help is needed - leaving families facing bills of up to £100,000 a year. If the NHS rules that help is required simply because someone is frail or elderly, this falls under social care which is means-tested. The analysis reveals a stark north-south divide - with elderly patients living in London and the home counties the least likely to see their care bills covered by the NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC) fund. A recent Parliamentary briefing paper sets out NHS England's efficiency plans, which require clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) "to make £855m of savings on CHC and NHS-funded nursing care by 2020/21" And NHS financial planning guidance sent last month [January], and seen by the Telegraph, instructs CCGs to ensure that far fewer people are assessed in hospital.

What is Continuing Healthcare funding?

Any patient with ongoing significant health needs - which are the primary reason they need help - should have the costs of their care paid in full by the NHS. It means that those suffering from conditions like dementia and Parkinson's disease can have all their care costs paid, regardless of their means.

But the definition of a "primary care need" is vague - and charities say that authorities are exploiting the looseness of the definition as an excuse to reject applicants.

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Health News

Temporary operating theatres to support patients requiring cataract surgery

Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust has installed temporary operating theatres at Stoke Mandeville to help its ophthalmology team tackle a backlog of patients requiring cataract surgery.

Cataract surgery is the most common procedure carried out within the NHS. With a growing and ageing population there is a national backlog of patients waiting for treatment and it is predicted this increase by 25% in the next 10 years. Bucks Healthcare NHS Trust recorded a 24% increase in the number of procedures carried out from April 2017-March 2018 in comparison with the same period the previous year.

The Trust has rented a temporary theatre for a 3 month period to help clear the backlog of patients requiring cataract surgery. The surgery will be provided by the Trust's own Consultants, who have agreed to provide extra operating sessions in what would normally be non-clinical time. It is hoped that the new temporary dedicated theatres will significantly reduce the size of waiting list and the time patients need to wait to have the procedure.

The success of this initiative will be closely monitored by the school of ophthalmology and by the Department of Health to understand whether it can be rolled out as a possible solution to this national issue. To date over 400 operations have been carried out since the temporary theatres were set up at the beginning of January this year.

healthwatch
Bucks

Board Meeting

The public are welcome to attend Healthwatch Board Meetings. The next one takes place on the 15th May at Lane End Youth & Community Centre at 14 00.

Let them know you are planning to attend by calling 01844 348839 and if you would like to ask a question, these should be submitted at least 5 days in advance by phone or info@healthwatchbucks.co.uk

Purple Rose end of life model of care



The Purple Rose Model of care has been developed for patients who are approaching the end of their life.

The purple rose model of care enables staff to work closely with patients and their families to embrace and accommodate individual wishes. The model also provides practical support for families, by removing inconvenient worries about such things as parking and visiting hours, allowing loved ones more time to focus on each other.

This initiative has been developed based on feedback from relatives and staff about what could improve our care for patients in their last days of life and allows us to improve support provided for their families into bereavement and beyond.

Staff throughout the Trust now have access to Purple Rose resource boxes on each ward that bring together practical resources and information so they can provide the best end of life care for patients and their loved ones.

Crippling Care Bills

Continued from page 6

Last year the Equality and Human Rights Commission threatened legal action against 13 CCGs accused of setting "arbitrary" limits on costs covered.

If the NHS rules that help is needed simply because someone is frail or elderly, this falls under social care which is means-tested, meaning pensioners have to pay the costs down to their last £23,500. Ministers have pledged to reform the social care system, capping the total amount any individual spends. But the issue has proved politically toxic.

Theresa May's plans to place charges on pensioners' homes were dubbed a "dementia tax" and the issue nearly cost the Tories the last election. Since then ministers have promised a green paper, but this has been repeatedly delayed.



2018

Contact Details for the Bucks Older People's Action Group

Andy can be contacted on

Tel : 01296 622122

E-mail : info@bopag.org.uk

BOPAG, c/o The Hale Farmhouse, Hale Lane,
Wendover HP22 6QR

Bucks Older People's Action Group Meetings

2019 Dates

March 20th,

May 15th,

July 17th

Sept 18th

November 20th

All are welcome. Meetings run 10-12.30 and are currently held at Christ the Servant King, Sycamore Road, High Wycombe, HP12 4TJ

Please contact Andy Trueman on 01296 622122 for further information

Pension Credit: Age UK says people should claim now before rules change in May

Pensioners with younger partners, who live on a low income, should put in a claim for Pension Credit as soon as possible, Age UK has said. From 15 May, the rule change will mean mixed-age couples where one partner is above state pension age and the other is below, will no longer be able to claim Pension Credit. These couples will have to claim Universal Credit instead, which could leave them up to £7,000 a year worse off compared to couples who get Pension Credit.

It is believed that 40,000 pensioners will be affected by the reform by 2020/21. The charity is urging the Government to reverse the decision.

Age UK is also calling on older people to check if they are entitled to Housing Benefit for people who have reached Pension Credit qualifying age, as this could mean they are eligible for Pension Credit before their younger partner reaches state pension age.

Dates for your diary

8th March Closing date for the Dignity In Care Awards. You can nominate and find out more at <https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/care-for-adults/dignity-in-care-awards-2019/>

12th March Free Taster of Chair Based Yoga
This course will give you a short introduction to the benefits of yoga breathing, movement and meditation. 3.30pm - 4.30pm at Beaconsfield Adult Learning Centre, Wattleton Road, HP9 1RN Contact Adult Learning to book your place or for more info 01296 382403 studentenquiries@buckscc.gov.uk

14th March The Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance (CSPA) Buckinghamshire group will be holding their first AGM at 1400, at Aylesbury Methodist Church Centre, Buckingham Street, Aylesbury HP20 2NQ

Everyone is welcome. It will be helpful if you can let the secretary Stuart Smith know if you are coming. stuartsmith181@gmail.com or 07792 681903.

15 March Closing date for nominations for the South Bucks Chairman's Community and Volunteering Awards 2019. You can nominate on line at www.southbucks.gov.uk/ChairmansAwards2019 For further information please call 01895 837306 or email community@southbucks.gov.uk

21st March Free Energy Switch Event 10-12 noon at Buckingham Library. Better Housing Better Health and Citizens Advice experts will be on hand to help residents find the best energy providers and offer help on reducing energy bills and funding repairs. Just bring along a copy of your energy bill.

21st March Hoarder Support Group 5.30-7.30 pm at Aylesbury Fire Station, Stocklake. Entrance Unit 7 This local peer support group will provide a safe place to speak to others with similar issues and get information and advice. The group meets monthly and light buffet refreshments are provided. No need to book, just pop in. Open to individuals, family members and carers in the community who are affected by hoarding. Further dates 18th April, 16th May, 13th June. For more information call Elaine on 01296 585364. or email ehassall@aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk

Bucks Health Trust Board Meetings

Wed 27 March 2019, 9am Hampden Lecture Theatre, Wycombe Hospital

Buckinghamshire CCG Board Meetings

Thursday 14 March 2019 Meetings take place 10.30-12.30. Jubilee Room, Aylesbury Vale District Council, the Gateway, Gatehouse Rd, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF