

Brampton and District 50+ Forum

Meeting held on Tuesday 26 September 2006 in Brampton Community Centre.

A group of approximately 28 people had lunch but the meeting had an attendance of about 40.

After welcoming everyone, especially new members, Ann gave out news and updates:

- Changes to a Bill before parliament to help protect vulnerable older people should ensure that people who are given money by the local authority to commission their own care - 'direct-payments users' - will receive equal access to the scheme.
- Help the Aged's submission to the Lyons' Inquiry into Council Tax. Help the Aged has recommended that Council Tax Benefit, much of which is unclaimed every year, ought to be re-named Council Tax Rebate and should be paid automatically to pensioners when they receive their Council Tax bills. Help the Aged also urges for the removal of the savings limit, currently £16,000, on Council Tax Benefit.
- Report of research from the Commission for Rural Communities. This confirms that most older people in rural areas want to stay in their own homes for as long as possible and would be able to do so if they had access to appropriate support services. Poor conditions and fuel poverty are familiar issues for older people in rural areas; a high proportion live alone, which may make them especially vulnerable.
- An International Day of Older People on 1st October will celebrate the role that older people play in the present day, both in the UK and across the world.
- NHS Community Health Profiles. An accurate picture of the health of the local community, including statistics on poor quality housing, older people supported at home, life expectancy, mental health treatment, people with diabetes, and much more, has been produced and will be released late in the year.
- Thursday 28 September is the last meeting of the present Primary Care Trusts for Cumbria. A new single PCT for the area will take over on 1 October 2006.
- Ann Oswin and Jean Taylor went to an interesting meeting of the Cumbria Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. Feedback is expected to be sent to us.
- A magazine – 'Activate' from Help the Aged with an enclosed Post Office account survey form.
- Members were warned of scams. 'Best of', from Ireland, was mentioned in particular. If in doubt, contact Trading Standards.
- Consideration is being given to the possibility of losing County Library facilities.

Cathryn McCrink was introduced to the meeting. She represents the Alzheimer's Society in the Lancashire area but temporarily she is also covering Carlisle District on one day per week. She gave a good description of dementia in its many forms, especially Alzheimer's disease, and went through the symptoms, duration and possible causes. Current attitudes towards dementia are similar to those towards cancer 30 to 40 years ago when it was thought that little could be done, that it was inevitable. Cathryn hoped that investigations would follow a similar course, that is, with modern research more would be found out about its causes and possible treatments. It is a disease and sufferers should be accorded the same help and treatment as with any other disease. Consideration should be given to drugs, diet (fruit, vegetables, oily fish are thought to be helpful), heredity, and preventative measures. Treatment might include gene therapy.

There are 750,00 cases in the UK; between the ages of 40 and 65 years, 1 in 1000 of the population has the disease; between the ages of 65 and 70 years, 1 in 50; over 80 year olds, 1 in 5. Memory loss alone could have other causes. Early treatment helps; drugs can and do make a difference. Some GPs think that nothing can be done, though GPs can receive extra funding for checking regularly for dementia. Diagnosis is the biggest barrier to treatment. Some people bury their heads in the sand becoming annoyed and frustrated by their condition. Social Services could help by giving support; all options should be explored. The impact on carers is underestimated: young children looking after parents and grandparents, 60 year olds looking after 80-90 year olds.

Cathryn concluded by describing what the Carlisle Branch, based in Rydal Street, does. It is well developed: there is day centre for 10 people, 7 days a week; home services and support services; a family support worker. Very few Forum members were aware of these facilities; Cathryn said that this fact would be reported back to Carlisle.

The Chair thanked Cathryn for her talk.

The meeting closed with tea, coffee and cold drinks, some members visiting the Business Centre to see the

community website. **The next 50+ Forum meeting** is on Tuesday 28th November 2006.