

Brampton and District 50+ Forum

Meeting held on Tuesday 23 January in Brampton Community Centre.

A group of about 40 members, including 7 new members, attended both the soup and sandwich lunch and the meeting.

The Chair, Maureen Granville, welcomed the members and then drew their attention to:

1. 'Better government for old people' - a conference.
2. Free copies of a box of leaflets from 'Help the Aged' giving information on a variety of topics such as 'Council Tax', 'Sharing your story' online, 'Care'.
3. The Post Office card account ('Help the Aged' leaflet)
4. A stress management course being run by 'Mind' at the Brampton Community Centre.
5. 'Who's Helen', a play and workshop (morning and afternoon performances) being presented at the Brampton Community Centre on 15th February.

Jean Taylor informed the meeting about a group she was attending regarding 'Falls'.

Valerie Stephenson, Age Concern's new representative, introduced herself to the meeting.

The Chair then introduced Eric Lowe MBE and his wife and invited Mr Lowe to address the Forum about the organization Independent Age.

Formed about 140 years in Liverpool, the Royal United Kingdom Beneficent Association (RUKBA) changed its name to 'Independent Age' last year. The organization helps individuals on very low incomes to remain independent in their own homes for as long as possible. About £250,000 in total is given in help to beneficiaries in Cumbria each year. There are two criteria for receiving assistance, namely: individuals must have given meaningful help to others, for example through voluntary work, employing others, being in a caring profession, being a long-term carer to a relative; beneficiaries have only a low income and limited savings. Help is given to people over 60 or those who are over 40 and are permanently unable to work for medical reasons.

Mr Lowe firstly described how he had found out about RUKBA when looking for help for his sister, and then his subsequent work for the organization as a volunteer visitor.

After showing a video about RUKBA's work in Cumbria, Mr Lowe gave more detail about the type of help that is given: a small annual income for life; grants to cover the cost of a TV licence, telephone rental, an annual holiday, purchase of new clothes and household linen, spectacles, damage to property. The help is confidential and state benefits are not affected.

In answers to questions from Forum members we learnt that Independent Age is funded entirely by legacies, donations, fund-raising events and investments. (There is a coffee morning in Brampton on 12th May.) If applicants don't fit the criteria, Independent Age's volunteer visitor may be able to suggest alternative sources of help. The role of a volunteer visitor is to keep in touch with about 8 beneficiaries, making sure that they receive all the grants that available.

Independent Age needs more volunteer visitors in the Brampton area. Training is given.

More information about Independent Age or about becoming a volunteer visitor can be obtained from Eric Lowe (01228 513030).

Forum members were encouraged to inform others about Independent Age.

The Chair thanked Mr Lowe and his wife. The meeting closed with tea and biscuits.

The next 50+ Forum meeting is on Tuesday 27 March 2007. The programme has yet to be finalized.

Other events:

Thursday 15 February Two performances of "Who's Helen?" Details will be displayed in Brampton and in the Community Centre.