



EASTBOURNE SENIORS FORUM
THE OVER FIFTIES FORUM
www.esf-online.org

Spring Newsletter Issue 9

A Message from the Chair

Dear Members

We are now well into the New Year and having such a mild winter, only last month in our garden in North Harbour we counted 14 different types of plants in flower, but then as soon as I started to write this, the cold snap has come in with a bang.

Do make sure you are keeping warm and taking care especially if you have to venture out when it gets icy or snows. See the piece on *Winter Home Check Service*.

It has been very pleasing to hear from some of you that you appreciate this newsletter, and find its contents very useful, do keep letting us know what things you would like to hear more about, what concerns or items that you feel we should be taking action on.

We have two particular things on our agenda at the momentone is to warn and alert you to the many ways in which seniors are being targeted with scams and cons, not to frighten you but to make you aware of potential problem areas ..We seniors are by nature a very trusting bunch, having been brought up to be polite and helpful and that can make us vulnerable, so don't be caught out.

The other thing is to try to encourage you to get onto computers. Seniors are missing out on so much by not having a go at it. It can help you to keep in touch with distant family, save you money and develop all sorts of interests and there are lots of ways available to help you.

See our new *Focus Group* and the piece on *Coffee Pot computing*.

The year ahead may be a tough one but we want to help all we can. See the piece on *"Living on a low income"*.

Finally, helping recently at a Food Bank collection point at Sainsbury's I was really impressed by how many 'seniors' came along with quantities of food to make life a bit easier for families who are struggling in Eastbourne. Over 2 tonnes of food was collected in the 2 days.

Well done to all who gave whatever their age! See piece on *Foodbank*.

Steve Thornett

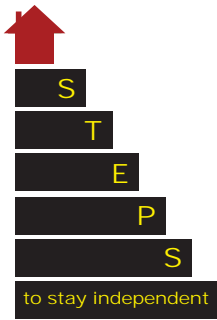


Take care when you are drawing out money from Banks or machines

Only just before Christmas a family member of mine in Maidstone had her purse with £500 in cash and 3 credit cards, all stolen with £200 being taken out of each card within a very short time.

She checked her balances in the bank and had an feeling someone was watching her but continued on to a building society where she withdrew £500. The clerk put it in an envelope as requested and she placed it inside a zipped pocket inside her shoulder bag and went off to catch the bus. Along the road she was met by an Asian man and woman who asked her the way to a nearby town. The man generally engaged her in conversation showing her a map and saying could she point out directions etc.

Unbeknown to her (she felt nothing) her wallet had been lifted but she did not discover this till sometime later some while after she got home. By the time she reported the theft her cards had been used and £600 taken. She was able to recover the credit card money but not the cash. Be warned... be careful.



STEPS

The STEPS service offers a short term, housing support service to people aged 65 and over who live in the East Sussex area.

STEPS can visit you at home and help you work out what support you personally need to keep living independently. Our service offers a wide range of support, tailored to what you need.

You may need housing support from STEPS if you are finding it difficult to live independently, if you are living in a property that isn't suitable for you, you are at risk of losing your home or have rent or mortgage arrears or other money or debt issues.

We can support you to:

- Claim any welfare benefits you are entitled to
- Liaise with your landlord or mortgage company
- Understand your tenancy or mortgage arrangement
- Find more suitable accommodation
- Set up or change utility suppliers
- Take part in healthy living activities
- Obtain specialist debt advice
- Find out about local groups or activities in your area
- Ensure your home is safe
- Resolve disputes or other issues with your neighbours



STEPS is funded by Supporting People Team at East Sussex County Council.

STEPS is available to anyone age 65 or over living in East Sussex. In Eastbourne, Lewes and Wealden the service is run by Eastbourne Homes.

If you feel that you would benefit from this kind of service you can apply by calling the STEPS Team on 01323 436 414
Email: referrals@stepswest.co.uk



Changes to the Blue Car Badge Scheme



From 1 January 2012, all Blue Car Badges will be printed and supplied by one company nationally, making them harder to forge or alter. From 1 April 2012, if you do not automatically qualify for a badge, your GP will no longer be responsible for deciding whether you qualify. Instead, local authorities will run 'mobility clinics' which will be held in, day centres, libraries and council buildings, where therapy staff will assess applicants. There will be a transitional period until April while these clinics are set up and begin replacing GP assessments. A mobility assessment will take around 45 minutes. It will include observation of your mobility, and questions on your disability, to decide if you qualify according to the rules set by the Department for Transport. In special circumstances, you may be able to have a home visit for the assessment. This would need to be approved by the Practice Manager.

From 1 January 2012 the issuing fee for a badge in East Sussex will increase from £2 to £10. This fee will be for the period the badge is valid, usually three years. Currently, they will be able to refund the £10 charge if your application is not successful. You will still automatically qualify for a badge if you:

- are registered blind under the National Assistance Act 1948;
- receive the higher rate mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance;
- receive a war pensioner's mobility supplement; or
- have been awarded a benefit under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, under tariffs 1-8.

If you qualify for a badge because you have been awarded Disability Living Allowance, the badge will be valid for as long as you receive it, which may be less than three years, but you will still have to pay the £10 charge.

Retirement flats for rent to people aged over 60 in Lakeside Court, Hampden Park, Eastbourne.

- Located a few minutes from Eastbourne town centre.
- Live independently in a safe and secure community
- Affordable rent includes utilities and repairs
- Communal lounges, conservatory, laundry, salon and lovely gardens

To find out more call 0300 303 1063



Southern Housing Group Limited is a charitable housing association

Community Information

Winter Home Check Service

In order to keep vulnerable households warm and well, East Sussex County Council has secured short term funding to offer practical advice and support to people during the winter.



The Winter Home Check Service includes:

- A full assessment of the home to identify how to keep it warm;
- Small preventative works such as reducing drafts, improving insulation, clearing gutters, lagging pipes and clearing chimneys;
- Providing additional temporary heating.

Eligibility Criteria

- Is a vulnerable adult over 16 years old;
- Is disabled (or any member of the household registered disabled) families with children on

a low income e.g. in receipt of one of the following benefits:

Income support, Council tax / housing benefit, Working families / Child tax credit with income less than £16,040, Job Seekers Allowance, income based employment and support allowance, joint claim Jobseekers Allowance;

- One application per household;
- Lives in East Sussex;
- The household finds it difficult to keep their home warm during cold weather.

In addition, if the person is 65 or over, and has no more than £10,000 in savings, regardless of income, they can also apply for a Handyperson grant of up to £200 to help with small maintenance or repair jobs around the home.

Contact Details

For further information or to make a referral please contact:

Social Care Direct by phone: 0345 60 80 191

email: socialcaredirect@eastsussex.gov.uk

Eastbourne Food Bank



How a foodbank works...

Food is donated by schools, churches, businesses and individuals who give non-perishable, in-date food to the foodbank 'Supermarket Collections' are one of the main ways that food is donated: these are food drives held at supermarkets where volunteers give shoppers a 'foodbank shopping list' and ask them to buy an extra item or two for local people in crisis.

Volunteers sort, check the dates and pack the food into boxes ready to be issued to people in need. Care professionals such as doctors, CAB, health visitors, social workers and police identify people in crisis, and they are issued with a voucher.

Foodbank clients bring their voucher to a foodbank centre where it can be redeemed for three days emergency food. Volunteers meet clients over a cup of tea and are able to signpost people to agencies able to solve the longer-term problem. A rural delivery service is also available.



Digital Switchover... Need Help?



Eastbourne Borough Council have arranged for Fiona Wellings (Sussex Co-ordinator, BBC's Switchover Help Scheme) to talk to a group on the **18th April at 12.30pm in the Town Hall.**

Seniors Forum members are welcome to attend. It is entirely free and open to all so come and bring friends who need help with **Switchover**. Fiona will also be offering advice and giving out leaflets. Depending on how many questions there are, it is expected that her session will be about an hour or so.

If you are intending to come please could you contact the office: equality@eastbourne.gov.uk or 01323 415163 to ensure space is available.

Look on the Bright Side

"You can't have everything...
Where would you put it?"



Our Website: www.esf-online.org

If you are a silver surfer, have you visited our website recently?

Visit our site and comment on its usefulness.

New Focus Groups

New – Computer Training

The use of computers and the Internet is now a requirement in our daily lives. Older people are being left behind and National programmes are now in place to help resolve this issue. Change does not come easily to those of us who don't type, don't like technology and who just don't like change.

A simple survey of the current ESF committee members revealed that, despite being users of computers and the Internet for a number of years, nearly all felt that they would benefit from some training. As a result, at the last Committee Meeting on the 17th Jan it was agreed to establish a *Computer Training Focus Group*.

Ebor Lodge Hotel was the venue for the launch on the 23rd January. The training took place in the hotel's breakfast room, which was arranged to accommodate four laptops provided by Coffee Pot Computing, a voluntary organisation working as a partner with ESF to deliver this project.



The hotel's broadband and WiFi were used to connect to the Internet. Steve Thornett, the ESF chairman, stated that "Ebor Lodge is the pilot venue as part of a project to offer Coffee & Computers in any available 'community space' to ESF members. He thanked Beryl Newson, a committee member, for offering her hotel and providing refreshments to the participants."

The training is free of charge and designed to help the absolute beginner however it is open to all members wanting a little help with their computing. In time, it's hoped Coffee and Computing will be established in more community locations throughout our town as more ESF volunteers become available.

If you'd like to be part of this group and could help or offer any advice based on your local computer training experiences please contact the Focus Group Leader, Colin Akers on 07872030297 or via email to: learning@esf-online.org

Look on the Bright Side

"I not only use all the brains that I have, but all that I can borrow."
Woodrow Wilson



Our Health and Wellbeing

Focus Group will be meeting again at 10am on Thursday 8 March 2012 at Broadway United Church Hall to discuss our Oct event, The Good Life . Please come if you would like to be involved.

Are You Living on a Low Income Focus Group?

In the current hard economic times many people over 50 are finding it increasingly difficult to manage so we are looking to see if as a Forum we can help and invite you to attend a Focus Group meeting. Initially we would like to hear from members what kind of help they would like? Options could include speakers from Citizens Advice Bureau, Age Concern, Job Centre etc and discussions on current topics eg: benefit changes, debt advice, maximising income or a lobbying group.

If there is the demand we could even put on a series of seminars on topics of common interest. Come and share your thoughts and ideas on **Tuesday 27th March** at Age Concern, The William & Patricia Venton Centre, Junction Road, Eastbourne starting at 12pm.

Geoff Ferguson, Lead Member

Member Notes

With this issue you will find some adverts or flyers with details of services or suppliers who we think will be of interest to you. These suppliers pay towards the cost of posting out our newsletters which helps us a lot, so if you use them please tell them you heard about them from ESF.

Any contacts you might have who would be interested in advertising with us or supplying flyers for posting, would be helpful.

Contact Eastbourne Seniors Forum

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