



# Stoic News

The Voice of older people in Southern Test Valley

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## FEATURE ARTICE by Paul Buxton

Age Concern Romsey & District are here to serve the needs and interests of older people in the Romsey and District area by helping to make life a more fulfilling and enjoyable experience. We are involved in providing a wide range of activities and services dedicated for older people right across our area from community based activities at our Linden Road Hall in Romsey, through to supplying 'Home Help', 'Pop-in', Gardening, Information and Signposting services. Many of these services are designed to help older people stay in their own homes for as long as possible and to live as independently as possible by supporting their domestic needs.

At our Hall we offer a full spectrum of activities and services designed primarily for older people.

These include the Thursday lunch club, afternoon tea each Tuesday, Monthly tea dances, weekly bingo sessions each Thursday, Extend exercise classes on Wednesday and Thursday mornings, right through to special festive teas and special events held throughout the year. The Hall also hosts a regular foot clinic and events and activities from other local voluntary, community and charitable organisations, as well as being available for other bookings subject to availability.

(List of events for January and February are available from Paul on request. Lunches usually take place between 12.00 and 13.30 hours and tea dances between 14.00 and 16.00 hours. Bookings for lunches preferred but not essential)

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

STOIC Forum meetings are held every two months at Age Concern 24 Linden Rd, Romsey. The next meeting is on Friday 22 January at 2.00 pm. with Benefits Advice - speaker from The Pension Service.

### Membership of £5 began in November 2009

The forums give an opportunity for over 55s to get together and discuss local issues important to them; to have a say in what matters to them in the areas of community, health, leisure, education, safety, housing, transport, benefits, age discrimination etc. If you need a transport you can ask Paul Buxton at Age Concern 24, Linden Rd Romsey on 01794 521398 or [carerssupport.romsey@virgin.net](mailto:carerssupport.romsey@virgin.net) for a sight of the minutes of previous meetings or visit the Website [www.romsnet.org.uk/STOIC/index.htm](http://www.romsnet.org.uk/STOIC/index.htm)

**Future Meetings - 12<sup>th</sup> March, 14<sup>th</sup> May, 9<sup>th</sup> July, 10<sup>th</sup> September, 12<sup>th</sup> November**

## LAST MEETING – First AGM

Anne Meader, our Chairman, outlined the activities of STOIC since its conception in January 2008. She advised us of some vacancies on the committee details, of which, can be seen later in this newsletter. Existing membership of the committee agreed to continue. She also announced the new annual subscription scheme of £5 per annum for the six meetings pointing out that the scheme allowed for an extra 4 months the first time as the year runs from April to April and the next subscription would not be due until April 2011. Dorothy Baverstock our treasurer followed with statement of the accounts which are very healthy.

The speaker, Jane Gulliver, from 'Hampshire County Trading Standards' then gave a talk on 'Protecting Older People/Reducing Doorstep Crime'. She spoke of rogue traders and how to deal with them; she mentioned the 'Safe and Sound' publication produced by Hampshire County. She warned against distraction burglary where two people call on some pretext and one occupies the

resident while the other is free to roam. Then she dealt with telephone scams and junk mail. Generally she advised anyone involved with a scam to contact HCC Trading Standards for advice.

The last event of the meeting was a request by Louisa Rice for feedback on the recent 'TVBC Consultation Process on Sport and Recreation in Test Valley' which was a questionnaire to enable improvements to be made and plans for the future. Responses were required by 11 December 2009 with results to be published in March 2010

### **A Follow up letter was received from Joy Farrow of 'HCC Trading Standards'**

Dear All,

As you may know we do a lot of work in trying to prevent scams. In recent months we have had an increased number of serious scam victims referred to us, many who have lost thousands of pounds. The worst case was an elderly gentleman who lost over £200,000 in buying non-existent shares. He borrowed some of this money and can now barely afford to live. In most cases there is little enforcement action we can take as the scams originate from outside the UK. We therefore do what we can to prevent people falling for them.

February 2010 has been designated **Scams Awareness Month** by the Office of Fair Trading and we are planning to use this as an opportunity to promote the issues both to potential victims and their friends and families. Would your organisation be able to help us with this? If so we have posters and leaflets for you to use/distribute to your clients and we are also able to attend events or give talks to highlight the problems.

As well as national publicity, we will be promoting it in supermarkets across the county. Please let me know how many leaflets and posters you want and if there are any suitable events for us to attend.

I would also be grateful if you could pass this information on to anyone else who may be able to help.

Thank you, Joy

### **THE LATER LIFE NEWSLETTER**

The Later Life Newsletter was first developed in November 2008 following requests from Government Office colleagues for up to date information around Later Life issues.

It is edited and distributed by the Later Life Performance Support Team within the Older People & Ageing Society (OPAS) Division of DWP.

The newsletter is produced monthly and provides the latest on strategy, policy initiatives, publications, and notable practice.

It quickly became apparent that there was wider interest in its content, and it now gets distributed more widely to Other Government Departments, Voluntary Sector organisations, Regional Forums on Ageing and older people's groups. We are happy for it to be shared further in order to raise awareness and to promote the adoption of notable practice and raise the profile and awareness of topical issues on ageing.

I hope you find the newsletter of interest - I welcome articles and items for inclusion in future newsletters, as well as feedback on format and content. The newsletter is just one of a number of products we are developing to raise the profile of later life issues, with the aim of improving the independence and well being of today's and tomorrow's older people.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Yours faithfully

Simon Wilkinson, Later Life Performance Support Team, Older People & Ageing Society Division  
Department for Work and Pensions.

## EDITOR'S SLOT

For this issue and for the next few issues I will be covering my experiences of downsizing and moving into a retirement property. My worsening arthritis has made this necessary and my husband and I to make the decision whether to sell up and buy an apartment or make alterations to our present home in order to make it more comfortable for us. If we stayed, of course, we would still have the garden and external maintenance to worry about. This I know is a problem shared with many 70+/80+ folk so I realise your thoughts may be with us. Maybe some of our experiences will be of use to others.

Our children think we should move, we, 'ourselves' are undecided. Whatever our eventual decision we first have to clear our house of 45 years of accumulated belongings. This is a mammoth task which we dread. We have decided to sell as much as possible, the remaining suitable items will be given to charity shops and the remainder disposed of. When this is done we will have come to decision time. Hopefully by the next issue of the newsletter we will have at least started this task.

*Veronica Lakey*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Anyone with any comments or concerns, good or bad, about matters raised at the current, past forums or have suggestions for future meeting topics are invited to write to the editor by post or e-mail for inclusion in 'Stoic News' Mrs Veronica Lakey, 21, Tadfield Crescent Romsey. Phone 01794 514609 Email: [oakbank21@talktalk.net](mailto:oakbank21@talktalk.net)

The 'Stoic News' does not set out to duplicate Paul's very professional and well recorded 'Notes on the last meeting,' but gives a brief summary for the benefit of people not attending the meeting and is posted with this newsletter on the website [www.romseynet.org.uk/STOIC/index.htm](http://www.romseynet.org.uk/STOIC/index.htm) Please remember we are not just interested in health issues but in anything that interests you.

## WE NEED VOLUNTEERS

**The Stoic committee needs volunteers to fill vacancies in the committee, namely a Vice-Chairman or Treasurer and a fundraiser.**

**Also distributors for the following areas:**

- **All the Churches except the Abbey and St Swithins**
- **North Baddesley – Village Hall, Churches, Surgeries and Shop**
- **All villages except Lockerley and Nursling**
- **Retirement home except Linden Court and Wakeford Court**

**Volunteers will each be responsible for pinning a newsletter to the notice boards at their chosen location around the town and surrounding areas and leave a small pile for people to take away.**

**This is definitely not a door-to-door delivery. Please get in touch with Veronica details above.**

### Members attendance at the 'Test Valley Transport Forum'

A volunteer is needed to attend 'Transport Forum' meetings which meet variably and alternate between Romsey and Andover. See Anne Meader for details.

Meeting dates 2010 – Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March and Monday 20<sup>th</sup> September (both starting at 10.am.)

The first meeting will be looking at Transport to Hospital/Health Transport.

### **OLDER PEOPLES INTERNATIONAL DAY      1<sup>st</sup> October 2010**

STOIC plans to hold events in the Crosfield Hall to celebrate this day.

Plans and discussions to take place later in the year.

### **DON'T FORGET 2010 FORUM MEETING DATES**

**12 MARCH**

**14 MAY**

**09 JULY**

**10 SEPTEMBER**

**12 NOVEMBER**

# **STOIC MEETING – NOTES & INFORMATION**

## **Age Concern Hall, Linden Road – Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2010**

The theme of our meeting this time was '**benefits and entitlements**'. We were delighted that Elspeth Watson from the DWP (Department of Work and Pensions) attended as our guest speaker. In her business development role for the DWP, Elspeth looks after Hampshire, of course including Romsey and the Test Valley area, from her Basingstoke office. The main objective of the talk was to raise awareness of the different types of benefits that are available to help older people, and to provide advice and guidance on how to go about claiming for them. Your local Pension Service can give further advice on eligibility criteria and assistance in completing the application form. They can arrange home visits by request if you don't want to apply over the phone. The first step in the process is to carry out a 'financial health check' on prospective claimants, then take into account any underlying health issues and any other things people may need from other service providers.

Pension Service National Phone Number is **0845 60 60 265**

Website Address is [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

Elspeth covered the following types of benefits:

- Pension Credit
- State Pension
- Attendance Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance
- Carer's Allowance
- Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefits

### **Pension Credit**

Used to top up low incomes. Eligibility is based on your income and savings. There are two different types of Pension Credit. 1) Guarantee Credit for those aged 60 or over. This guarantees to top up your weekly income to £130 (if single) and to £198.45 (if a couple). 2) Savings Credit for those aged 65 or over and have some savings or a second pension. You are allowed to have up to £10,000 in savings. You may get the Savings Credit on its own or with the Guarantee Credit.

### **State Pension**

A number of changes were announced in October last year. One of the biggest changes being the increase in the age for state retirement pension for women from 60 to 65 (phased in from 2010 to 2020). State pension age for both men and women is increasing to 68 beginning from 2024 onwards.

From April this year you only need to have worked for 30 years (i.e. making National Insurance contributions) to be entitled to a full pension (previously 44 for men and 39 for women).

### **Attendance Allowance**

Non means-tested, but need to be over 65; usually given to people with a disability who need help caring for themselves. Current weekly rates are £47.10 (day) and £70.35 (night).

### **Disability Living Allowance**

Similar to the Attendance Allowance but for under 65s.

### **Carer's Allowance**

Taxable benefit to help people who look after someone who is disabled. Current weekly rate is £53.10.

### **Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefits**

Tax free, but means-tested. May be paid to people on low incomes who need help to pay the rent or council tax. Can't have savings over £16,000.

Elspeth also explained **Cold Weather Payments** (over and above Winter Fuel Payments made to those over 60). £25 is given towards eligible customers' heating costs during each 7 day period of very cold weather (i.e. below zero each day). This payment is automatically triggered to people receiving means-tested benefits.

**Concessionary benefits** for over 60s e.g. bus passes, prescription charges, eyesight tests etc stay unchanged for the time being.

### **Update on 'Scams'**

This follows on from our November meeting when our speaker from Hampshire Trading Standards spoke about protecting older people from doorstep crime, rogue traders and scams. Paul Buxton gave a brief update on scams and the fact that February 2010 has been designated Scams Awareness month by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) to raise peoples' overall awareness of scams. Locally this initiative is supported by Hampshire County Council's Trading Standards Service.

An excellent booklet - 'Scambuster – Your guide to beating the scammers' has been produced by the OFT and copies were given out at the meeting. It tells you what to look out for, how to protect yourself and how to report scams to Consumer Direct (Trading Standards). Please contact Paul on 01974 521398 if you would like a copy of the booklet.

### **'Scambuster' and 'Bogus Caller' Musical Events**

Mollie Antrobus (TVCS) announced that 2 plays/musicals are taking place at the Lights Theatre in Andover on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> February. Tickets are free by ringing the theatre on 01264 362600. Both plays are based on true stories and are light-hearted and entertaining whilst still delivering all the right key messages. The first play starts at 11.15am and the other one starts at 1.30pm.

### **A.O.B.**

#### **Vacancies of our Committee**

Anne mentioned that we still have a couple of vacancies and would appreciate any volunteers i.e. for a new Vice-Chairman or Treasurer and a fund-raiser.

#### **Older Peoples' International Day – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010**

At our previous meeting we agreed that it would be a good idea to have our own 'STOIC event' to coincide with this International Day. The Crosfield Hall in Romsey has now been booked and we are holding an initial planning meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> January to agree the best way forward and will feedback progress made at our next meeting.

#### **STOIC Newsletter**

Your input to the next newsletter in March would be much appreciated. Please contact Veronica Lakey by e-mail ([oakbank21@talktalk.net](mailto:oakbank21@talktalk.net)) or via the Age Concern Office on 01794 521398. Copies of our newsletter can be found on our website [www.romsey.net.org.uk/STOIC/index.htm](http://www.romsey.net.org.uk/STOIC/index.htm)

Volunteers are still needed to distribute copies of the newsletter in most areas (see January Newsletter for more details). Not door-to-door, just to specific locations.

It was suggested that we should have a 'Good Ideas' section in the newsletter, after one of our members came up with an excellent way to remove stubborn tops from bottles. The advice is to put an upside down bottle on a damp cloth and turn it clockwise.

### **Test Valley Transport Forum**

A volunteer(s) is invited to attend meetings on behalf of STOIC. Meetings alternate between Romsey and Andover. Meeting dates are Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March and Monday 20<sup>th</sup> September. Please contact Anne Meader for details.

### **The Later Life Newsletter**

Produced, edited and distributed by OPAS (Older People & Ageing Society), part of the DWP. It's produced monthly and includes up-to-date and topical information around issues in later life and ageing. Items of interest in the latest newsletter include, staying warm in winter, treatment for older people's depression and a new website for grandparents. Copies were given out at the meeting. Please contact Paul Buxton (01794 521398) for more details.

### **Hampshire Association of Older Peoples' Forums**

It's hoped that the recently appointed Development Worker (Jane Mielniczek) will be able to attend our March or May Forum. Feedback from the 15<sup>th</sup> January country-wide workshop indicated that Jane is initially concentrating efforts on those areas currently without a forum and working towards setting them up. Havant will be one of the first. Much of the time at the workshop was spent discussing the Association's proposed Constitution. Also, one of the Hampshire County councillors (portfolio holder) asked for input as to how the Council did during the recent period of snow and icy weather and how they could do things better.

### **Possible Campaign Issue**

Contents instructions on food packets and containers are far too small to read and may be a possible issue for action that STOIC as a group could champion and take forward.

### **Raffle Prizes**

A gentle reminder to everyone...please bring a small raffle prize to our meetings. This is a perfect opportunity for fund-raising.

**Our next STOIC meeting will take place on Friday 12th March 2010 at the Age Concern Hall, Romsey from 2.05 to 4.00pm.** The theme of the meeting will be advised in due course.

### **Rest of the dates for 2010** (Fridays at 2.05pm)

- 12<sup>th</sup> March
- 14<sup>th</sup> May
- 9<sup>th</sup> July
- 10<sup>th</sup> September
- 12<sup>th</sup> November