

SPEAKING UP FOR OUR AGE CONFERENCE and launch of SOUTH EAST NETWORK OF SENIORS

Late last year, representatives from organisations throughout the South East gathered together at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) to launch the warmly welcomed **South East Network for Seniors (SENS)** which will become the umbrella group for Forums in the region. Peter Morgan of **Swale Pensioner's Forum** was elected Chair and members were co-opted to become part of the Committee (see below). The steering Group had previously invited Gerry Mahaffrey from the **Government Office for the South East**. A member from the newly inaugurated committee was nominated to attend the first meeting of the new government vehicle for meeting with Ministers, the **UK Advisory Board on**



Douglas Dean & A.J.Hall - Thames Valley Over 50s forum with Gerry Mahaffrey, Government Office SE

Ageing. Actor Sylvia Syms, lightened the event with amusing anecdotes about performances for **Stage for Age**, a charitable group of very famous thespians who run a fundraising committee to support older people.

SPEAKING UP FOR OUR AGE



LINKING OLDER PEOPLE'S GROUPS

ISSUE 44

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Tony Hall (Thames Valley), Don Harper (Southampton), Barrie Finch - hidden - (Oxfordshire), Anne Thomson (Mole Valley), Jean Gaston-Parry (Lewes), Kate Davies (Meridian), Chris Tough (Dover), Sudershan Swahney (Slough), Peter Morgan (Swale) Chair, Haberman Singh (Greenwich).

One sad note, a member had her purse stolen which was very upsetting for her – a strong reminder to us all to keep our precious things close to us. The next full meeting of SENS will be on 3rd February 2010, **Help the Aged**, York House, 207–221 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ.

We celebrated our 25th Anniversary!

CAMERON PHILPOT

The Chesterfield & North-East Derbyshire Pensioner's Action Association has just celebrated its 25th Anniversary! To mark the occasion, members attended a celebration buffet and a special cake was commissioned to mark the event. All members received a special commemorative badge to mark this historic milestone. Chairperson, Doreen Philpot (pictured) says 'We are extremely grateful to those who helped make this event a success and in the words epitomised by the late Jack Jones. 'We will keep right on to the end of the road'. Cameron Philpot, Secretary, **Chesterfield & North-East Pensioner's Action Association**, 4 Scarsdale Crescent, Brimington, Chesterfield, S43 1AN



LETTERS

The £25 winner for the best letter in Issue 43 is
Robert Boorman, COPE

To the Editor

It is a sad beginning to 2010 for the **Sutton Seniors Forum** (SSF) with David Dombey's death. He started the Forum in 1996, In 2004/5 he won the **UK Award for Public Servant of the Year** (non executive), and in 2006, SSF won the **Queens Award for Voluntary Service**. It was his 'baby' and he was determined to ensure that the Forum was not left unattended due to his periods of incapacity. Two years have passed since David & Brenda first encouraged me to become involved and a year since I became Acting Chair. During this time David was continuously generous with both help and information; he consulted me sensitively, and showed complete support in my activities and remained totally committed to the Forum. A real indication of this, for me, was a message David sent me shortly before he died, asking me to make sure 'folk' knew about the higher Attendance Allowance which he was delighted to receive following his own diagnosis. He certainly wanted to get the information out there for all older people right to the end!



Jill Gascoine-Becker, Acting Chair,

Sutton Seniors Forum,

Granfers Community Centre, 73-79 Oakhill Road,
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To the Editor

THE GENERAL ELECTION

With a General Election getting closer, it is worth considering just what the public will be voting for. A New Labour government has signed the Lisbon Treaty, thus abdicating responsibility for the majority of our affairs. Using political manipulation they reneged on the promised vote and insulted the electorate's intelligence. In effect the status of elected representatives in Parliament will be nothing more than that of Parish Councillors. The UK PARISH COUNCIL, housed in Westminster, has been born. But unlike their local counterparts, they will be extremely well paid courtesy of the taxpayer. For the privilege of reduced status, our current annual net European contribution of £4.1 billion will increase by a further £5 million/day from 2010 to help fund an approved EU budget of £116 billion. This begs the question 'Why is a cash-strapped nation, that can't afford to properly finance this country's needs, borrowing money to support others?' Think hard, is

this really what we want after fighting the war for freedom?

Les Cooper, **Cannock Seniors,**

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To the Editor

Thank you very much for the warmth of your congratulations. You may like to know that I have been invited to go to Buckingham Palace on Feb 12 to receive my 'gong', an M.B.E. for services to my community and I hope to be able to take my wife and my three daughters. At some point, I will share with you and my colleagues my account of the experience so that all may be prepared for receiving their recognition!



Peter Morgan MBE, Chair,

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To the Editor

At last, I've just sent off a message of congratulation to Tessa Harding MBE. We've only worked together occasionally but it was always interesting and worthwhile, thanks to her judgment and experience. Good that she has received the *Alan Walker Prize*. I thought this would be a good opportunity to say that I am still one of your grateful readers. There is nothing quite like *Forum to Forum* to make one conscious of so much growth and development in our good cause. Governments still have to catch up with us! Brian Groombridge, President Emeritus of the **Educational Centre's Association**
email: bgroombridge@blueyonder.co.uk

To the Editor

Thank you for the congratulations! I received a letter from the Cabinet Office on the 13th November 2009 stating the Prime Minister had asked me to be informed in strict confidence that I be appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the New Year 2010 Honours List. It was hard to keep it from my wife and family until New Years Day.' I accepted because I did feel proud of being



recommended, but also by working with the **Birmingham Advisory Council of Older People** (BACOP) one can receive this honour and BACOP has been truly recognised by Birmingham City Council. I have received many congratulations from some very influential people - I feel very proud that this honour reflects on BACOP.

Barry K Clewer MBE

email: Barryclewer@btinternet.com

To the Editor

During this election year we have to get things into perspective, sift out the political ideology and realise what a very wealthy country ours is. Our estimated debt is said to be £805 billion pounds – or 75 per cent of GDP (gross domestic product; which stands for the total market value of goods and services produced by a country in a given year). In fact this is lower than the debt of Germany (76%), Italy (104%) and Japan (a whopping 198% in 2008), for example. In fact it wasn't until 2002 that the present Government paid off the billions that we borrowed from the United States in fighting the Second World War. The huge debt incurred through the war did not stop the post war government borrowing to rebuild Britain and create the welfare state. If that could be done then for a shattered country with a bigger debt than now, why should government spending be drastically cut at the present time? For it is Government spending that the old, the young and the vulnerable, so depend upon.

Anne Belworthy, **Canterbury & District Forum**,
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To the Editor

On the 8th October I attended a regional meeting at the Carriageworks, Leeds. I, personally, was very disappointed to learn that many of the members of the Policy Dept at HtA are no longer there. These extremely helpful young people helped me and my colleagues to speak up for ourselves. Through them I was appointed as a member of the Reference Group (representing our area of the country) who worked with civil servants from the Dept of Health on establishing the **National Service Framework for the Elderly**. They also gave me confidence to speak at national Conferences. Older people have much to offer but in order to have an impact through their Forums, they need help to become established. We are now recognised by our local Council, Health Trusts and Social Services who involve us in all issues affecting older people. Will this help

and support be forthcoming under the new Charity?

Jean Wormwell, **Pensioner's Action Group East**

Riding (PAGER), The Resource Centre,

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ARE YOU AN INTERNET REFUSENIK?

DAVID ANDREWES

The younger generation browse and blog, tweet and twitter, download and upload and post comments and pictures on email and web. I go online for fresh vegetables, theatre tickets, train tickets, my bank account, medical appointments, repeat prescriptions and missed programmes.

I get news from relatives abroad, answers to general knowledge crosswords and information about local events. I cannot envisage a life of isolation and boredom. So why do 60% of our generation shun the internet which is a life-line for the other 40%? Ignorance? Apathy? Poverty?

For beginners in Eastleigh's Southern Parishes, it costs nothing. There are: the Online Centre; an Age Concern drop-in Centre; a flourishing U3A computer group with domiciliary visiting; a daily drop-in centre resourced by the Hampshire Library Service. Soon we may have drop-in centres in sheltered housing. Just Google 'UK Online Centres' or phone 0800 77 1234 to get started, *Forum to Forum* is crying out for an interactive website where we can exchange news and views. But we need finance and training. If **AgeUK** is serious about listening to older people, they must help give us our voice. They must put their money where our mouse is! We don't shun the internet because we are old: we are old because we shun the internet! *David Andrewes, Webmaster, Eastleigh Southern Parishes Older People's Forum*, Orchard Hill, Salterns Lane, Old Bursledon, SO31 8DH.

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GREEN PAPER IS CRITICIZED IN BARNLSLEY

JOAN HORBURY

Today **Barnsley Social Services** had their consultation on the Government Green Paper for Care, of which a dozen people from the Older People's Community Forum took part. Our Chair, Mary Moreton opened the meeting, introducing Martin Farran, Chief Executive of Barnsley Social Services and Lynne Elliott, Chief Executive of Barnsley Arena, who gave short summaries on what they expected from the meeting. We then divided into groups with each discussing different sections of the Paper. Our group found the jargon it contained was unnecessary; we wanted more information to be given to the general public not just various consultation bodies. We were entirely against the

Government cancelling the section that related to free care for all, it should be reinstated in the White Paper. Another issue talked about was the £20,000 the Government want to charge for care in later life, it was pointed out that this did not include board and accommodation. If a person should need residential care, that would have to be paid for by the person separately. The consultation was concluded for the time being so that all the different view points could be combined, and feedback could be sent to all participants.

Joan Horbury, **Barnsley Older People's Community Forum**, Arcadia House, 72-74 Market St, Barnsley, S70 1SN
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REFORMING COUNCIL TAX - SORRY!

KEN LACEY

A recent edition of *Forum to Forum* included an article taken from **Weston-super-Mare Senior Citizens Forum's** newsletter referring to 'Reforming Council Tax' which was a précis of a twenty-seven page document produced by Roger Redman of Taunton. I did ask Roger if I could abbreviate his work in order to give it wider coverage to which he agreed. However, unfortunately, I omitted to give credit to him for his work and this I sincerely regret and apologise for unreservedly. I was also wrong for stating that twenty-five Forums had combined to support his proposals, this should have read only fourteen Forums. Again, my apologies for this error. If Mr Redman's document was adopted by a main political party it would certainly enhance their chances at the General Election and relieve the main problem that older people have with the present unjust system of council tax. However, to overturn the mindset of political parties that a property tax is the only way of funding Local Government is an enormous challenge but Roger's work does deserve examination.

Ken Lacey, Chairman, **Weston-super-Mare Senior Citizens Forum**, Flat 3, 10 Clarence Grove Road, Weston-super-Mare BS23 4AQ

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'Boxing' Day in Wales

WINNIE DAVIES

Rene Gannon, Vice Chairperson of the **Vale Older People's Strategy Forum** and Winnie Davies, Executive member, were given a warm welcome when they met with Jane Hutt, Minister for Budget and Business, to deliver the *New Year 'box'* containing messages and letters on behalf of people using housing support. We were delighted to be involved in delivering the box from *Cymorth Cymru* (the umbrella body for providers of housing-related support) to Mrs Hutt. Winnie Davies, **Vale of Glamorgan Older People's Strategy Forum**, 52a Pill Street, Penarth, CF642JR. Tel: 02920 707045
email:winnie_davies2001@hotmail.com



Rene Gannon Vice-Chairperson, Jane Hutt AM and Winnie Davies Executive member

NUMBER NINE IN A SERIES

forum PEOPLE

JOHN DODSON

MIKE SEALE

SHROPSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF SENIOR CITIZENS FORUMS

John is currently the Chairman of the Shropshire Association as well as being Vice Chair of the **Wem and Whitchurch District Forum**. He has been an active Forum member from the very beginning of the movement in Shropshire. Married to Val, they are the much loved grandparents of a large and extended family. As well as his time consuming involvement with the Senior Citizens Forum, John is Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the **Whitchurch Chapel Centre**, a successful arts and healthy living centre that serves the whole of North Shropshire.

A former executive in the ceramics industry, John is himself a talented artist and designs and leads many of the Chapel Centre activities from the front.



He robustly represents the forum and all senior citizens on numerous council committees such as the *Community Services* and the *Health and Well Being Scrutiny Panels*. Despite the enormous amount of time that John gives to the Forum, he is a keen caravanner and still finds time at weekends to hitch up the van, load his two dogs and set off with Val to explore the countryside. John is truly living proof of the saying that life can begin, rather than end, at the age of 65. We are proud to acknowledge John's hard work and dedication in pursuit of a better deal for all our senior citizens.

Mike Seale, Secretary, **Shropshire Association of Senior Citizens**, Old Grammar School House, School Gardens, Shrewsbury SY1 2AJ
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Please send us information and a photograph of a 'special' person in your Forum. It does not have to be a member of the executive - a cheerful, loyal and thoughtful person, perhaps who is getting on in years but not reduced in passion for pensioner justice!

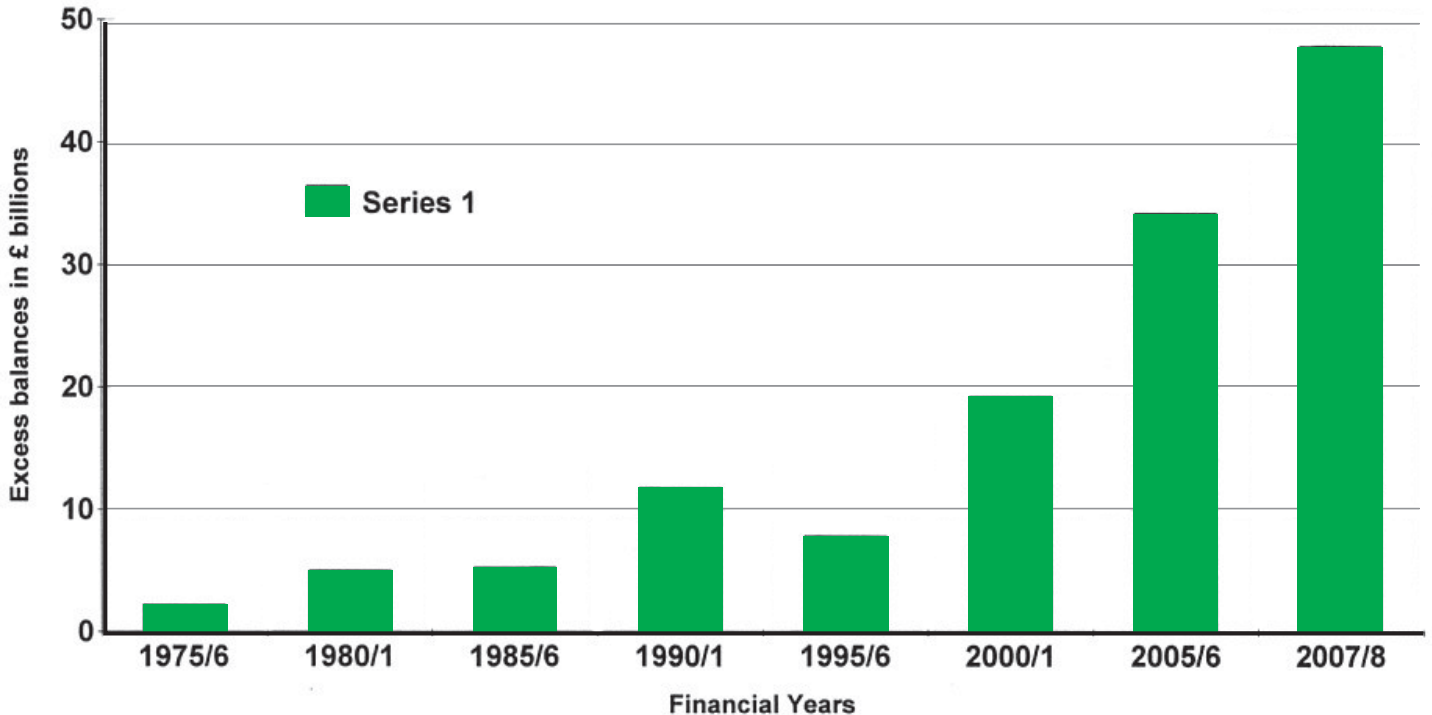
Elderly couple die in a freezing home

ROBERT BOORMAN

The post mortem report on Mrs Randall (79) and her carer husband (76) reports that he died of pneumonia and cancer and she of heart failure. The concerns expressed by our organisation COPE, (see below), about fuel poverty experienced by 2.2 million elderly people in this country today, have been justified by the freezing conditions found in their house, which clearly contributed to both these tragic deaths. Spending more money on Social Services to ensure the health of pensioners could help to reduce hospital admissions and enable older people to live longer, more comfortable and happy lives. Elderly people are not always able to make sensible decisions about their lives and when this couple and their neighbours asked for help they should have

received an immediate assessment and if their wishes proved to be dangerous or unrealistic, someone independent should be able to step in and speak and act on their behalf. Just because someone is a homeowner and has cash does not ensure an understanding of the complexities of the social and health services systems. Currently Cambridgeshire County Council has a projected Social Services budget deficit and they have been told to reduce expenditure in the coming years as funding will be reduced. *Robert Boorman*, Vice Chairman, COPE **Cambridgeshire Older People's Enterprise**, 40 Stretton Avenue, Cambridge, Cambs CB4 3EP
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National Insurance Fund - excess balances from 1975 to 2008



WHAT EXACTLY IS THE TRUTH? WHERE HAS OUR MONEY GONE?

Government auditors say this money belongs to the NIF and a reserve of just £11 billion is needed.

House of Commons Library says this money is ring-fenced and reserved only for pensions and associated benefits. BUT...

Some MPs say the money simply isn't there!

Some MPs say the money is being used for "other purposes"!

Some MPs say there is no fund, Dr Vince Cable MP says it is a "notional fund"!

Some MPs say the money is needed for future payments!

Some MPs say the money is "on loan" to the government!

AND YET,....

With contributions rolling in daily, £40 to £50 billion in reserve, and NI contributions rising again in 2011, **not a single Political party has pledged to use this money to boost our basic State pension – reportedly now the THIRD WORST IN THE WHOLE OF EUROPE!**

Produced by Devon Pensioners' Action Forum from figures provided by the House of Commons Library dated 11-02-2009

© DPAF December 2009 (NB: monthly update - at 01-12-2009 the balance was £44.958 billion)

Sent to us by: *Michael Rose*, **Devon Pensioner's Action Group**, Sidcliffe Farmhouse, Sid Road, Sidmouth EX10 9AL
e-mail: m.awrose@tiscali.co.uk Tel: 01395 577459

FROM THE **NATIONAL PENSIONER'S CONVENTION**

DOT GIBSON

Christmas is traditionally a time of goodwill to all – but the Chancellor has managed to offer millions of pensioners little more than a dose of Scrooge inspired bah humbug. The pre-budget report gives with one hand – but then takes away with the other, and does little to tackle rising pensioner poverty, fuel poverty or the impact that the recession is continuing to have on older savers. One in four pensioners still live in poverty and rising costs of food and fuel, combined

with record lows in savings returns and underperforming pensions, mean that pensioners continue to suffer a disproportionate increase in the cost of living. In light of all this, the Chancellor's promise to raise the state pension next year by £2.40 a week but then take more than half of it back again will bring little cheer to Britain's pensioners.

Dot Gibson, **National Pensioner's Convention**,
19-23 Ironmonger Row, London EC1V 3QP.
Tel: 0207-553 6510 email: via Web Site

The Engagement Development Reference Group (EDRG)

JACKIE ALLEN

On 4th December I attended a meeting organised by the new Engagement Team, part of Group Services for the forthcoming **AgeUK**. There were people representing Senior Forums, Carers Support Groups (Alzheimer's Society), Sheltered Housing, NHS Retirement Fellowship, Unison & CAB Civil Service Pensioners, Mature Citizens Action Group, Chinese Women's Group and many others. It was a delight to meet people from such diverse backgrounds. Kate Adams then set the scene. I was somewhat disconcerted to see a handout setting out the terms of reference. It stated that the purpose of EDRG will be to develop and provide advice and ideas to support **AgeUK**. I couldn't resist asking what was the perception of the word 'engagement', for when I and other Forum representatives work with local authorities we are engaged in formulating strategies, involved in commissioning services and the appointment of key staff and these 'terms of reference' did not imply the same level of



Diana Davies, National Social Development Officer, Friendship Centres and Special Interest Groups with Jackie Allen, Forum 55 Dorchester

engagement. During group discussions people expressed views about being involved in decision making. We then reviewed three newsletters (*Linkage*, *Forum to Forum* and *BME Elders*). Possibly I'm being too critical of an organisation in the early stages of development but if older people don't express their honest views others will continue to make assumptions about our capabilities. *Next meeting, 3rd March 2010. Jackie Allen, Chair, 55 Forum Dorchester and District, 2, Vicarage Lane, Charminster, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 9QF. email: jallen6285@aol.com*

KAVU OLDER PEOPLES WELFARE CLUB



LIGHTON KANJUNGU

In April 2006, we mobilized our older people and formed an older people's club and in 2009 we were given our certificate from the Registrar of Societies in Lusaka, Zambia. We had built a mud brick Club House, but now we have built a Club House where all activities will be carried out once completed. We have done so to attract the attention of the Civic leaders to learn about the existence of the older people. We are holding two types of meetings a week, Executive members on Thursdays, and a general meeting on Fridays. Using the internet is very expensive but we have no option but to download the training material.

For three months we had been feeding our members but unfortunately we have run out of funds to continue to feed them. We take our members to the Health Centre for checkups, and provide home based care services. Visitation is compulsory and we visit every home for various reasons: befriending, encouragement, and to show them that they matter. We give personal care – those who can't wash themselves – we shave and wash them and their clothes. We try to make their homes as hygienic as possible. At the moment we have 10 members (6 women and 4 men) providing this service under the supervision of the project officer. We want to engage in capacity building and every month we hold a study group sharing knowledge about: Human rights – Gender – HIV and fundraising. The latter is problematic as we need fundraising ideas to prevent our older people from starving.

Lighton Kanjungu, Co-ordinator,

Kavu Older People's Welfare Club

c/o Kavu Heath Centre, P.O. Box 71724 Ndola, ZAMBIA. email: debbie.beale@helptheaged.org.uk

If any Forum can help please contact Speaking Up For Our Age



DON'T GIVE UP JUST YET!

Grandma Moses

Anna Mary Moses began painting rural scenes on her Virginia farm after her husband died. In 1938 she was 'discovered' by the New York art market when she was 78 years old. She declined to attend her first New York exhibition ('Why bother? I have already seen the pictures'). In 1946 she agreed to license her paintings for reproduction as greetings cards, and she was catapulted to fame. By the time she died in 1961, she had produced over 2500 works of art. While her age contributed to her fame, her work has stood the test of time, disproving those critics who once claimed her work had no merit. *Sent to us by* **Bristol Older People's Forum**, c/o Age Concern, Canningford House, 38 Victoria Street, Bristol BS1 6BY
Tel: 0117 927 9222
email: bopf@ageconcernbristol.org.uk

OLGA TRAINS SOCIAL CARE STAFF

JACKIE DUNCAN

We are pleased and proud to tell you that we recently presented our first training session for Social Care Managers and Staff on 'End of Life Care Issues'.



Jackie Duncan, Mary Birch and Jackie Burnett

Language – The main thrust of our training is to influence the language used by health and social care providers, eg: not the question 'Are you married, single or divorced?', but instead, 'Do you have a significant

other person/s in your life?'. Secondly, ask 'In what way does this significant other person/s help you, e.g. physical, emotional, social, financial help?' This neutral all-inclusive language will be acceptable to everybody – including heterosexuals. Also, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people may feel more relaxed about disclosing the 'whole' of their care needs. This should help everybody to receive a more personalised care service. The LGBT community itself has a responsibility to educate itself about how it can get better health and social care provision. **Next of Kin** – Care assessment questions and medical staff should know by now that new legislation, Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Reg. 2007, requires that all people are given the opportunity to nominate their Next of Kin and this can include friends, as well as partners, or family members. This is particularly important in the gay community where the family disapproves of their sexual orientation. The Gay Community becomes our family. **OLGA**, Jackie Duncan, Hon. Secretary. Tel: 07929 465044

FROM THE EDITOR

The irregular arrival of *Forum to Forum* hopefully is now at an end, with a new person in Admin. I want to ask all the Forums what they think about obituaries. So far we have not done it – but for some it would be well received – can your Forum please think about it and let me know. Obviously we could only cover 'prominent' members – but even that could prove divisive. Copy date for next issue, week beginning 1st March 2010.



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Have we got your contact details right - any changes - please contact the following people

England: Debbie Beale, Civic Engagement Officer *including* Speaking Up for Our Age, Age Concern and Help the Aged, York House, 207–221 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ. Tel: 01258 458406
Mob: 07595 090 452. email: debbie.beale@helptheaged.org.uk

Scotland: Helen Simpson, Age Concern and Help the Aged in Scotland, Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1PR. Tel: 0845 833 0200. email: Helen.Simpson@ageconcernandhelptheagedscotland.org.uk

Wales: Kathy Lye, Age Concern Cymru and Help the Aged in Wales, Tŷ John Pathy, 13/14 Neptune Court, Vanguard Way, Cardiff CF24 5PJ. Tel: 029 2043 1555. email: SUFOWales@helptheagedwales.org.uk
Contact for the Wales section of the website is www.accymru.org.uk

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