



Charity No: 10453081

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community

January February 2015 Newsletter

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

"Beat the Winter Blues Party"

Old Fire Station, 84 Mayton Street, Nags Head
Thursday 25th February 2015 from 1 pm onwards
good friends * good food and drink * good entertainment

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES the route to social justice

Islington Voluntary Sector Conference, 29 November 2014

Richard Watts, leader of Islington Council, thanked everybody for coming to "what is a crucial part of Islington life", saying: "You are the social glue that holds the borough together!"

He had a hard message to deliver: £112m had been taken away from the borough in government grants over four years, resulting in a third less spending; another £95m cut is threatened, meaning the borough will have only half of the pre-cuts spending. This means that the £30m a year currently spent on the voluntary sector would have to be reduced. "But please do not be deterred," he said, "we can assure you that this will not happen overnight, but the conversation has to start now. We will discuss with you every step of the way; it will mean becoming more resilient and more skilful in managing your running costs.

David Robinson OBE, co-founder of Community Links said that at a meeting he attended in a school the children's self-portraits were displayed with a message explaining what they were good at and Michael, aged 7 said: "I am good at big dreams!" He said this is true of the voluntary sector, and now we have to have the vision and the action to respond to changing circumstances, building organisations with a culture expecting continuing change, risk-taking and collaboration.

We need to get something out of the crisis; this means working more closely with each other, not just regular networking, but continuously sharing, planning and cooperating, and also sharing spaces. It means asking ourselves the question: "How can we act earlier for prevention – what would one-step earlier look like?"

*"I am
good at
big dreams"*

Six discussion workshops were held on: Access to services, Fair Finance, Food Poverty, Islington Employment Commission, Social Enterprise and Welfare Reform. Each group put a question to a panel comprised of:

Jeremy Corbyn MP, Cllr Rakhia Ismail, Executive Member for Community Development, Colin Adams of Octopus Community Network and Roz Miller of the Islington Faiths Forum.

NOTE: The Islington Pensioners Forum Loneliness project could positively look at one of the main problems revealed at this conference, i.e. making contact with people who need services. Once contact is made, volunteers find four main problems:

- not knowing that the services exist;
- confusion and lack of self-confidence, or having experienced difficulties when previously trying;
- language barriers;
- physical or mental health problems.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Firstly, we are delighted to welcome on board Islington resident Dot Gibson, general secretary of the National Pensioners Convention, who has agreed to take over the role of secretary at Islington Pensioners' Forum.

Dot will help us organise speakers for our popular monthly forum as well as expanding our activities in 2015 to include more get-togethers that will help us reduce isolation and loneliness and promote active ageing with the help of our Awards For All funding which we received last year along with our council funding. Now we need to find a treasurer. . . . Any volunteers will be greatly welcomed, please let Ann know.

After the Christmas break, it did not take long for the pantomime of political opposition to begin. I was about to write this when on the TV we heard the pantomime dialogue "Oh no you didn't" – "Oh yes I did" from the two main opponents, which brings us back into realism.

The British public is now being bombarded with argument and counter-argument as to who will run the country from May 2015, a serious responsibility.

We all have our separate views on what we would like to happen, I therefore make no apology for expressing sometimes angry criticism of what appears to be nasty and detrimental to those less able to defend themselves.

The present day policies of deregulation where regulation is clearly needed is extremely harmful. And by far the wealthy are reaping any benefit this country has to offer, as against the poor and working

people on moderate income; this imbalance of inequality has to be adjusted giving tax breaks to the already wealthy, and at the same time penalising the poorest in our society is immoral. These are just two issues that come to mind, most people will agree that a fairer more equal balance is badly needed.

There are many issues that require deep thought, discussion, and to be finally settled. To name a few; privatisation, the cutting of the welfare budget, and the continuous failure of government to take up the urgent problem of the ageing population where the present and past governments have ignored this deliberately. Nobody wants to tackle this tricky subject.

Several other issues need to be resolved, such as the significant attacks to reduce the trade unions' ability to represent their membership, which has resulted in more self-employed, contracts of doubtful character, low pay and poorer conditions. Carers and care homes; dignity code and many other issues relating to older care need government clarification. The next few months will be more than active, we will hear half-truths and lies, no doubt. **Beware of the half-truths!**

"The Super-Rich and Us" BBC2 Thursdays 9 pm

If you didn't view this programme on 8 January, maybe you can do so on BBC i-player. Jacques Peretti looks at why Britain has more billionaires per capita than any other country and that it is more by design than accident that many of them are not paying their taxes. This wealth, some argue, makes us all richer. Peretti asks: "whose misjudgment was that and what has it really cost us?"

Next part: Thursday 15 January looks at rich people in the United States



George Durack

2014 was George's ninetieth year. He said he was embarrassed that his family, friends and comrades wanted to celebrate because for him it was "business as usual!" But that is just the point George. YOUR "business as usual" is working might and main to build the movement for social justice and that is why we in Islington Pensioners Forum are so proud of you. This picture is of the gathering in the Mayor's Parlour on 16 December.

“HOW TO INFLUENCE THE POLITICAL AGENDA”

Everybody is aware of the way lobbying companies, representing the likes of the oil and tobacco corporations and the gun lobby pour millions of dollars into US electioneering. Lobbying of politicians in the UK may be more discreet, but concerns have been expressed for many years, and it was a relief when the Coalition government announced that it would be bringing in legislation on transparency in lobbying.

However, this turned out to be: THE TRANSPARENCY IN LOBBYING, NON-PARTY CAMPAIGNING AND TRADE UNION ADMINISTRATION ACT, aimed at curtailing grass-roots campaigning by groups like Green Peace, the National Pensioners Convention, the charities and trade unions.

To add insult to injury, on the last day before the Christmass recess, David Cameron announced his appointment of former Conservative minister, Lady Angela Browning to chair the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (ACOPA) which recommends whether ministers, senior civil servants and top aides can take up private sector jobs on leaving their government posts.

GEORGE DURACK draws your attention to the report by **ROWENA MASON**, published in *The Guardian* on 31 December.

● The political system is still rotten!

David Cameron has appointed Tory peer, Lady Browning to chair ACOPA, for which she will receive around £8,000 a year in public money for two or three days a month of work!

Lady Browning, a Home Office minister until 2011, is already paid between £300 and £800 a day for occasional work for political consultancy, Cumberlege Eden. According to its website this firm trains people in the health industry on topics such as “how to influence the political agenda” and how to “gain experience of influencing the local MP over a topical health issue”.

A former deputy chairman of the Conservative party, Lady Browning will take up the role four months before the general election, after which it is possible a raft of her colleagues will want to take up private sector jobs and will need approval.

Other ACOPA members, Labour’s Paul Flynn MP and LibDem Greg Mulholland MP have expressed their disapproval of this appointment, especially as Cameron made a public promise to overhaul the system that scrutinises the massive political scandals attached to lobbying.

Flynn said: “The revolving door is deeply corrupting not just when ministers leave government but when they look for these jobs while still in government. It’s not theoretical, it’s actually happened. You’ve got the great and the good who think it is normal to pick up huge sums for a few days’ work and are actually presiding as judge and jury over what people like themselves do. . . . in no way is it a body to protect the public interest. It is a body to protect their own over-awarded jobs in retirement years. It. . . goes to the heart of what is wrong with the political system.”

● The political system is still rotten!

Have You Renewed Your Freedom Pass?

If your Freedom Pass runs out at the end of March you should receive a letter from Islington Council. This tells you a unique renewal number, which you will need to renew your Freedom Pass. You can renew online or by post.

If you don’t have access to the internet you can use the computers at your local library, or come in to the IPF office (phone 020 7226 7687) and we will help you apply. If you have not received the letter from the Council, phone the ‘helpline’: 0300 3301433

If you were born before Sept 1952 you should be eligible for an Older Person’s Freedom Pass. You can download a form from www.freedompass.org

The IPF meeting in November “packed with optimism!”

RIGHT UP THERE IN OUR CAMPAIGN AGAINST LONELINESS

What a meeting! Packed with optimism and right up there in our campaign against loneliness. . . there could be no better place to bring these three dedicated people together than our Islington Pensioners' Forum (November) monthly meeting!

Clare (Fuel Poverty Action), **Alf** (Kevin Richards Foundation) and **Patrice** (Islington Carers' Hub) gave us the benefit of their experience, speaking with such feeling and commitment.

Fuel Poverty Action has an 8-point Energy Bill of Rights laying out the basics needed to prevent people having to choose: "heat or eat?" This can be accessed on www.fuelpovertyaction.org.uk.

They also have "keep warm" cafes. The government figure for cold-related deaths (winter 2012-13) was 31,000! Fuel Poverty Action was calling a demonstration to coincide with the announcement of the 2013-14 figure on 28 November.

The Kevin Richards Foundation is a charity set up in memory of a much-loved son who tragically died in 2010 in a road accident.

Based at the Baptist Church in Hilldrop Road, Holloway, N7 0JE, the Foundation is bubbling with activities: a luncheon club, bingo, dominoes, interest groups (e.g. flower arrangement, basket-work, knitting), big birthday parties four times a year, outings, music and dancing! Everybody welcome!

The Islington Carers' Hub (www.islingtoncarershub.org 0800 085 1141 or 020 7561 5517) is based near Finsbury Park Station at 225-229 Seven Sisters Road, N4 2DA.

Many people do not think of themselves as carers. They are "simply doing what comes naturally - looking after a loved one", but the wear and tear, the strain of caring can mean stress illnesses which creep up and suddenly become unbearable.

Get in touch with Islington Carers' Hub in good time - there are weekly get-togethers in different parts of the borough, and help with anything a family carer needs (big or small). So if you or anybody you know needs assistance, there are dedicated staff, working directly with the Council.

***** Islington Councillor Janet Burgess awarded an MBE *****

In addition to winning the 2014 LGIU Age UK Councillor Achievement Award, Councillor Janet Burgess has been awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours List. Cllr Burgess has been a leading advocate for Islington's older people throughout her time as a Councillor and particularly in her role as Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing.

Some of her main achievements include establishing the Council's first Older People's Champions, arranging a Pensioners Christmas Lunch for 100 older people, and fighting to provide free swimming for over 60s in all Islington Council-funded leisure centres.

Janet Burgess has set an excellent

in New Year Honours List



Councillor Janet Burgess, serving Christmas lunch to pensioners in the Town Hall in December 2014

example to others on issues such as ending 15-minute care visits, and most recently she took a lead in securing a contract for home carers where they are guaranteed the London living wage.

Determined that care workers are recognised for their magnificent vocational dedication to frail elderly and disabled people, Janet is preparing for the annual Dignity in Care Awards ceremony on 30th January. Richard Watts, leader of Islington Council, said: "Janet has been a real pioneer and set the standard for other councils in London. I can't think of anyone who deserves this honour more."

Islington Pensioners Forum says: "Well done Janet!"

“500,000 older people have been rationed out of the social care system”

The media is full of stories about the crisis in the NHS: the queues in Accident and Emergency departments, the number of people turning up at hospitals because they are having difficulty accessing their GP, and, as usual, the discussion turns to the number of old people in hospital beds, and we can see that on the tip of the political commentators’ tongues is “old people are bed-blockers”!

Hardly any mention is made of the crisis in social care exacerbated by the government’s cuts in funding. The London School of Economics has found that since 2009, 500,000 older people have been rationed out of the social care system.

Now the government has published new guidelines explaining who will be eligible for social care services in the future. Under the changes an individual must have difficulty undertaking at least two of the following actions in order to qualify for support:

- maintaining nutrition,
- maintaining personal hygiene,
- toileting,
- dressing,
- maintaining relationships or, e.g.
- being able to use public transport.

This is likely to lead to a further reduction in the number of individuals eligible to receive some form of social care in their own home, and therefore even more older people found by relatives or neighbours in need of help and so reaching for the telephone to dial 999.

A recent YouGov poll showed that seven out of 10 pensioners are not confident that they would receive good care and two-thirds feel that the government should be doing more.

Information from “Campaign” the monthly information bulletin of the NPC www.npcuk.org

We couldn’t let the opportunity pass to publish the fact that Jeremy Corbyn MP won the 2014 Parliamentary Beard of the Year award -- that means he has won the award for a record five times.



The International Longevity Centre says: “UK state pension one of the worst in EU”

Britain’s state pension is typically just a third of average wages, according to new research from the International Longevity Centre (ILC).

After 30 or more years of paying National Insurance contributions, the UK state pension is just £113.10 a week and one of the worst in Europe.

By comparison, the state pension in the rest of the EU works out at around half national income. The ILC also found that the UK has a greater number of pensioners at risk of poverty -- 16% compared to a European average of 13%.

Those who suffer most are usually women, who have to rely on their husband’s contributions in order to get their pension.

Next April the basic state pension will rise by £2.85 a week for those on a full state pension and by £1.75 for those on a reduced pension. This is based on a 2.5% rise, guaranteed by the “triple lock” arrangement. The Consumer Price index figure was just 1.2% and wages a mere 0.9%.

The National Pensioners Convention campaigns for a basic state pension above the poverty level, currently standing at £178.

Information from “Campaign” the monthly information bulletin of the NPC www.npcuk.org



PLEASE NOTE

- Weekly **meditation** with Marie at IPF 11.30-12.30 pm Wednesdays. Stay afterwards, chat, have lunch. 1a Providence Court. N1 0RN. Call 020 7226 7687 / 020 7607 6444, **re-starts on 28 January**
- Keep Calm & Make Your Computer Work For You! Weekly **IT** sessions at Hilldrop Community Centre with Peter on Fridays. Call 020 7226 7687 / 07981 142376, **re-starts on 30 January.**

INFORMATION

Thursday 15 January	FORUM MEETING 10.30 am Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 Speakers: Teresa Debono, Mayor of Islington and the Community Police Officer
Tuesday 27 January	Holocaust Memorial Day: 10.30 am to 1.45 pm Assembly Hall, Islington Town Hall -- a Holocaust survivor, a Bosnian Refugee and a panel discussion. Book at 020 7527 3147 or grace.plester@islington.gov.uk
Friday 30 January	Islington Pensioners Forum campaign in support of the NPC Dignity Code -- more information at above meeting.
Thursday 19 February	FORUM MEETING 10.30 am Islington Town Hall, Speakers: Pam Zinkin, Jenette Arnold OBE AM, and a speaker from Action on Hearing Loss
Sunday 22 February	Old Time Music Hall at the Business Design Centre (more information at the IPF meetings)
Wednesday 25 February	"Beat the Winter Blues" IPF party 1 pm onwards at the Old Fire Station, 84 Mayton Street, Nags Head.

Membership and Funding

From the start of this year we will have a membership fee of just £5 a year. This was agreed at the AGM in July. We don't wish to exclude anyone, so for those who find difficulty affording this, IPF will waive the fee. If you can afford more please do, as printing and postage for the newsletter costs around £8 per member per year. If you would like to make an annual direct debit, our bank details:

Co-op Bank -- SORT CODE: 08-90-33

a/c name: ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM -- a/c number: 50014279

We take this opportunity to thank those who generously donated their winter fuel allowance and thanks also to Islington Council for another year of part-funding IPF.

We want to hear from you.

- Write to Islington Pensioners Forum, 1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN
- Call us on: 020 7226 7687 Email us at: ipf@talktalkbusiness.net
- Our office is open from 10.30 a.m. -- 2.30 p.m., Tuesday to Thursday, but please call first.
- Sign up for our online newsletter on our website: www.islingtonpensionersforum.co.uk

Presidents: Jeremy Corbyn MP & Lord Smith of Finsbury **Chair:** George Durack

Charity No: 10453081 We are supported by the Awards For All and Islington Council