

Sevenoaks District
Seniors Action Forum

Working together in the interests of people aged 50 plus

Email: comms@sdsaf.org.uk

July 2020

Dear Forum Member

In a recent U3A French conversation class we have been discussing a letter attributed to Madame de Sévigny, a French authoress in the 17th Century, telling her daughter not to visit her in Paris to avoid spreading 'the scourge'. She talked about having her groceries delivered and missing her outings to the theatre and sent her daughter a couple of pretty masks that had become fashion items. Plus ça change.....

It is comforting to know that these phases in our history come and go. Society has a great ability to adapt and move on and all the disruptions and sorrows merge into the next stage of growth and development.

Our task now, as we emerge from our places of retreat, is to find our confidence again, to grab life by the throat and to extract all the joy, fun, love and positivity that we can. And if we need help in any way we must reach out for the support that is available.

We have heard some great messages from our members this week: 'I will continue to leave little gifts on my neighbours' doorsteps', 'We are going to be sensible but have as much fun as we can', 'I am making sure I keep mobile and exercise daily so that I can continue to get out and about', 'I am going to get the new taxi bus and go to the supermarket so that I get used to shopping again', 'I've saved a bit of money during lockdown and am giving some to a local charity', 'We are going to continue our new habits of daily walks, healthy food and regular prayer and meditation', 'We are thrilled to have learned how to talk with our grandchildren on Zoom and to do online shopping - it was easier than we thought'.

When we sent out our messages to friends and family last Christmas none of us predicted months of lockdown and a big reset of our lives. Let us hope that in this year's Christmas cards we can tell our family and friends that we have brushed ourselves down after one of those tricky patches in life, we have learned some lessons, we are continuing to take care of ourselves and each other and we are facing the future with optimism.

Eileen Murray Giles,
Chair

BBC TV Licensing

From August 2020 people over 75 will have to pay £157.50 for a television licence. As we have pointed out in previous Newsletters those qualifying for Pension Credit will not have to pay it. Nationally this move has encouraged 450,000 people to apply for Pension Credit, so if you are on a low income you may wish to make enquiries as to whether you could receive it. ***Please be cautious and do not respond to any emails or phone calls purporting to be from TV Licensing asking for your banking details as they will not be genuine.***

Please help us to boost our Membership!

Over the past 10 years, due to the tireless work of our founding members, the Management Committee and other helpers our membership now stands at 1,169. Recruitment is particularly challenging this year as we are unable to attend the fetes and fairs where we would normally garner support and enlist new members. We would therefore be grateful if you could encourage any of your friends and neighbours to join us so that we can continue to grow and achieve our aims and ambitions to make life better for older people in the District. The membership form can be found on our website www.sdsaf.org.uk and can now be completed on line as well. If you don't have access to the internet you can phone The Secretary on 07707 757201 who will be happy to post a membership form to you.

Our Buses – An Update

So where are we now with local bus services?

It depends where you want to go to.

We are incredibly lucky here in Sevenoaks quite simply because our principal bus operator is based here in our own town and as a consequence can provide a service that I believe is totally unique within this country, the 'go2' service.

Currently there are no timetables quite simply because there are no regular bus services!



You want to go somewhere? Simply ring them and they will send a bus to your nearest bus stop, usually within half an hour. Then they will take you to wherever in the Sevenoaks district you want to go, and when you have finished whatever your trip entails ring them again and they will come and collect you. It is exactly like a taxi service.

It really is that simple. I know because I use the service nearly every day and I have never been let down and indeed I have never had to wait long for *my* bus, never more than thirty minutes. My journeys are usually well within this. That's when travelling around the town itself; Tesco, Sainsburys/Aldi, even coming back from Otford and Kemsing.

If you are going to use the service you do need to register with them first and they will give you a membership number. Having got that you ring them for a bus when you want it, you cannot pre-book. Repeating myself, the service is totally unique and most importantly it works, so to ensure that we keep it, **USE IT!**

You can do so from 06.00 - 19.30 Mon to Fri, 07.00 – 1900 Sats. The current fare structure applies, but if you have a Seniors Bus Pass **IT IS FREE !** You can also book a bus to these hospitals: Tunbridge Wells, Orpington, Queen Mary's Sidcup and and The Princess Royal Farnborough, for a fixed fare of £5 per journey.

To contact them : go2now.co.uk or phone **01732 463 964**

Barry Morse

Age UK Sevenoaks & Tonbridge Strength and Stability

Thanks go to Sue Larken of Age UK who has mastered the art of recording her strength and stability classes from her own home, enabling people to maintain their balance and strength. We look forward to the time when the Pop In groups can restart up but in the meantime the exercises can be seen either on our website for via <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81MhS2UGb1E&feature=youtu.be>

Keeping Active, Healthy and Fit

As well as doing Sue Larken's exercises during lockdown we have had the opportunity to participate in some interesting conversations about how to maintain good physical and mental health due to the constraints on our normal daily lives. What seems to be a common theme for both of these issues is to try and keep active by doing some exercise each day, have a healthy and balanced diet and to stimulate our minds. Good quality sleep is also important to recharge our batteries.

A New On-line Music Station - m4dradio.com

There seems to be a dearth of easy listening music on radio, so we were pleased to discover the launch of a new free radio station m4dradio.com. Listeners can choose from a selection of music from the 1930s/40s, 1950s, 1960s and 1970s 24 hours a day. The station can be accessed via any internet-enabled device including computers, tablets, mobile phones, smart TVs and Alexas.

Music for Dementia launched this service to help people with dementia and their carers but having listened to the station we feel that anyone interested in taking a nostalgic, musical interlude down memory lane would enjoy tuning in.

<https://m4dradio.com/>.



Covid-19 Regulations

The Government's guidance around what we can and cannot do has been changing rapidly over the past two months as the incidence of infections seems to have declined. However, this week's news of outbreaks in Leicester as well as parts of Spain and Australia demonstrate how quickly it can recur.

The advice for shielding people has changed in July and this will alter again in August. If you have not had a letter advising you what to do, and you are unsure and cannot access the Department of Health website you should contact your GP for advice.

The general advice for those aged 70 and over continues to be to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household.

When going out care should be taken to maintain a safe distance from others. They and everyone should continue to comply with any general social distancing restrictions.

From the beginning of the outbreak good hand hygiene has been encouraged, either using hand sanitiser or washing your hands for 20 seconds - two verses of Happy Birthday!

It is now necessary to wear face coverings when using public transport, and will become mandatory when shopping from 24th July. Face coverings are also required if visiting any medical facilities.

Passport Applications and Visa Renewals

While it seems that cruises are off the agenda for the time being, travel restrictions to various parts of the world are slowly being lifted. Prospective holiday makers might wish to check that their passports will be valid for their journeys, noting the following from the Passport Office's website: "It is taking longer than usual to process applications because of coronavirus (COVID-19). Do not apply unless you're travelling before September 2020 or you need a passport urgently for compassionate reasons."

Every Step Counts is Back!



Every Step Counts is a gentle, supportive walking group which run walks in the district.

It is aimed at people who would like to get outside, chat and meet new people at the same time as improving or maintaining their fitness.

The walks are shorter than a health walk and encouragement and support is provided every step of the way.

The walks vary in time, length and speed to accommodate people's abilities and needs and take into account physical ability and stamina. Some walkers can only manage a few minutes whilst others can walk a mile all are accommodated.

The walks are led by trained walk leaders who are volunteers.

After the walk there is an option to have refreshments and to enjoy the company of the group.

It doesn't matter if you can only manage a short distance, are recovering from an operation, are trying to lose weight, need someone to encourage you to exercise or would like to have company. Every Step Counts.

Covid 19 risk assessed walks we are offering at the moment are:

West Kingsdown Wednesday 10.30am meeting at the West Kingsdown Pavillion
Otford on Wednesday 10am mustering at 10am by the gate into the recreation ground
Sevenoaks on Thursday 2pm meeting at Greatness Recreation Ground car park
Swanley Park on Thursday 10am meeting opposite the café

If you would like more details or would like to join a group please contact Irene on everystepcounts17@gmail.com or telephone 07899 985196.



Meeting with Laura Trott M.P. and Tom Tugendhat M.P.

On the 10th July members of the Committee were offered the opportunity to meet with Laura Trott and Tom Tugendhat.

As the Sevenoaks District covers both of their constituencies this appealed to us and seemed a very efficient way of raising issues common to older people in both the Sevenoaks and Edenbridge area.



For this meeting we thought it would be a good idea to make the focus of our discussion Connectivity and Information Technology, as during the pandemic lockdown the advantages of being on line and having access to technology were clearly illustrated. In many cases, for people living alone and those shielding, it proved an invaluable resource to reduce isolation and loneliness.

At the same time as discussing the advantages of being on-line, we highlighted the need for more education around using devices but also drew to Laura and Tom's notice the high number of older people in the District who have no access to broadband, Smartphones or iPads. We therefore asked for their help in identifying ways to make IT more accessible. They pledged to find out from Oliver Dowden, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what the Government's current strategy was and to report back to us in due course.

We were also at pains to point out what people who are not on-line are excluded from, and asked for reassurance that Government organisations like the NHS and Department of Work & Pensions would ensure that their services are accessible to those who do not have the internet.

Both MPs urged anyone who is experiencing problems or barriers to services because they are not on-line to write to them and let them know the details.

As Frank McConnell, our former Chair often said, if nobody knows about your problem don't just keep it to yourself, and speak up so that something can be done about it. Finding a solution will not only help you but help others in future and our MPs will be more than happy to help.

We thanked the MPs for taking time out of their busy schedules and look forward to meeting with them again in the not too distant future.

Good News

- ❖ National Trust grounds at Chartwell, Emmetts, Ightham and Knole Park are open (Advance booking is required)
- ❖ Free parking in Sevenoaks Town Car Park located near the Leisure Centre, close to a pedestrian entrance to Knole Park
- ❖ Public houses and some restaurants allowed to open from 4th July – enjoy responsibly and safely! (Many require advance booking)

Praise

- Lockdown Larder, Sevenoaks, who have supplied food parcels to needy people
- Compaid, who have kept in touch with their clients and provided help on-line
- Volunteer drivers at Sevenoaks Hospital taking people to appointments
- go2now buses for enabling people without a car to travel around the District safely
- All the local shops and traders who have made exceptional efforts during the pandemic to provide provisions and food throughout. We hope that people will continue to support these businesses who have sustained us during a trying time. They have provided service with a smile and in many cases have gone the extra mile – and in some cases many more! *Thank you.*

News from Kent Libraries

Kent Libraries have announced that on 13th July some libraries will re-open. The hours are Monday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. However, they will have limited services available, including pre-bookable computers and Wi Fi. The Home library service deliveries alongside their postal loan service have also restarted which is very good news.

Due to social distancing measures, browsing will not be allowed. To allow customers to borrow books, a **Select and Collect** service is being introduced at Dartford, Gravesend, Sevenoaks and Tonbridge libraries. More information is available on the Kent Libraries website or you can telephone 03000 41 31 31 to find out more details.

And don't forget, if you have internet access membership of KCC Libraries enables you to see a wide variety of newspapers on-line via Pressreader, a very worthwhile benefit of becoming a member.

As an avid reader I have really missed borrowing books from the Library and was keen to Select and Collect but found the process rather arduous. I therefore chose the option of letting the Librarian choose 6 books from a chosen genre, so I will be interested to see what they choose for me! It could be a voyage into unknown territory but will surely be more stimulating than watching the many repeats currently on the television.

SDSAF Secretary

Request for Volunteers

Riddle: You cannot see or feel it, and it has gone before you know it!
We all have it.... so would you like to donate a little of yours to help make life better for our seniors?



If so why not help us to give out information, get our seniors on-line, lobby for better health, housing and transport, improve social lives and alleviate loneliness?

If we get things right for seniors then everyone will benefit. Maybe you could help us with research, respond to consultations, meet with our MPs, make tea and cakes, help to run events or do PR for us. If you have a talent we can use it.

Young or old, please volunteer some of your precious time. Message Eileen on 07775 568 834 or email chair@sdsaf.org.uk with your much appreciated offers of help.

Health Services

Kent & Medway Clinical Ethics Committee Draft Terms of Reference

The Forum submitted a letter and questions to the Board of the Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group in June as we had concerns about the proposed Terms of Reference of the Clinical Ethics Committee. The Board are currently not meeting in public due to Covid-19 restrictions but we received a reply to our letter advising that the draft Terms of Reference are being reviewed in the light of comments which were made. We will make sure that we study the revised Terms of Reference when they are next submitted for Board approval.

Stroke Services: Medway NHS Trust are no longer offering a stroke service therefore patients who have had a stroke in the Medway area will now be treated at either Maidstone Hospital or Darent Valley Hospital.

Dermatology Services in North Kent:

Kent & Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) have had concerns about the way DMC has managed the service and their ability to meet NHS standard contract requirements. It would appear that data indicates some patients have been on waiting lists for longer than they should have been. To ensure patient safety, the CCG have suspended DMC's contract to provide dermatology services. They will be conducting a full harm review to give assurance to patients and anyone who may be at risk will be contacted as soon as possible.

If you live in the former Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley CCG area and have any concerns about your Dermatology appointments, treatment or care it is recommended you raise this with your GP.

GP Walk-in Centre Northfleet

The NHS have now closed The White Horse GP Walk-in Centre in Northfleet and is advising patients who would have used this service to call their own GP and ask for an urgent appointment or to call 111.

Kent & Medway Care Record

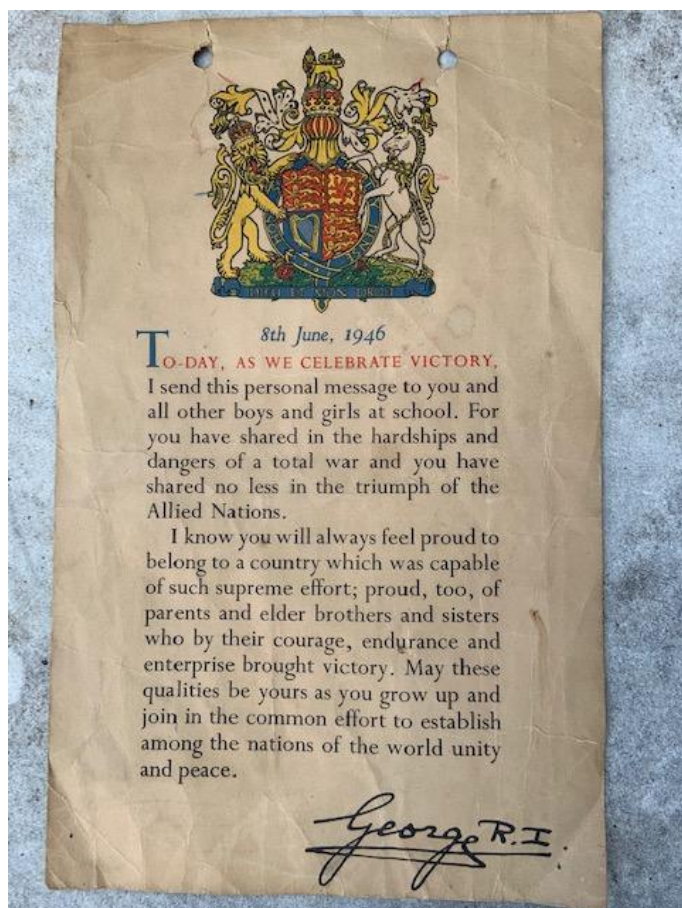
Members of our Committee have been part of the Citizens' Engagement process in the development of the Kent & Medway Care Record. The purpose of the record is to enable health and social care professionals to quickly access the care you may have been receiving from a wide variety of providers. With your consent it will enable professionals delivering your care to view things like the medications you are taking, what services you have used in the past and what help you receive in your home. The Forum will issue updates as the project progresses.

NHS Resuming Normal Service

Since the onset of the pandemic the NHS has had to radically adapt its services due to these unprecedented times, and have reorganised to ensure both patients and staff remain as safe as possible. Services around the District have adjusted to adhere to social distancing measures. This includes asking all patients and visitors to hospital and GP premises to wear a face covering.

Things are gradually returning to a 'new normal' but it seems that it will be a long haul. However, if you have had an appointment postponed or cancelled during the pandemic it might be advisable to contact your healthcare provider to get an update to find out when and where you can expect to be seen, as some hospitals have commissioned some procedures to be carried out at different sites.

An Interesting Memento – A letter from King George VI to Schoolchildren at the end of the War



Alan Dixon's wartime story in our last issue prompted another member, Anne Hillis, to seek out this lovingly preserved letter which was sent to school children at the end of the Second World War.

At a time when rationing was still in place and communities across the country were mourning their loved ones and rebuilding their lives it must have given so many children the feeling that they were not forgotten.

This is particularly poignant at the moment when everyone, not least all the children who have not been able to go to school or socialise, have been adjusting to a changed way of life.

If you have any memorabilia and would like to share your story about it in the Newsletter we would be pleased to hear from you.

Reminder - Annual General Meeting – 11 a.m. 24 July 2020

As mentioned in our last Newsletter, to comply with social distancing rules our Annual General Meeting this year will be on Friday, 24 July at 11 a.m. via Zoom. If you have already indicated you will be joining us a link will be sent to you the day before. We are hopeful that the broadband around the District will be kind to us and that the meeting will go smoothly and without too many hitches.

It is not too late to register or to nominate yourself or someone else (with their permission) to join the Committee so please do consider volunteering to help the Forum continue and expand its efforts.

If you can join the virtual AGM please let us know by return email as soon as possible. Members who are unable to make that date and members who do not have access to the internet but wish to stand for election or make a nomination are invited to telephone the Forum Secretary on 07707 757201 who will ensure your wishes are recorded and actioned.

Keeping in Touch

If you have received this Newsletter by post and you have an email address and would be happy to receive it by email, please send a message to newsletter@sdsaf.org.uk, letting us know your email address. By doing this it will save us postage and be kinder to the environment.

**To contact the Forum Committee email Eileen Murray Giles at : chair@sdsaf.org.uk
or write to us "Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum"**

**22 Lambarde Road, TN13 3HT
SDSAF Website: www.sdsaf.org.uk**

By the way . . . The newsletter is available in large print; please let us know if you would like to receive a copy.