

# SEVENOAKS DISTRICT SENIORS ACTION FORUM

## Newsletter 25 November 2016

The meeting place for the interests of people aged 50 plus

# 1004

**Congratulations to All our Members** SDSAF Membership topped 1000 in September 2016. There's strength in unity and with over 1000 members decision makers in local government or the NHS need to listen to what we have to say.

**Your House? or Your Home?** Somewhere to live is a basic human need. For those who are lucky enough, where you have lived for some time has become your home. We look for stability and we only want to move from our homes to new places if it's that's what *we want* to do. Sadly, life doesn't work out well for everyone and circumstances can mean that home owners have to sell and landlords might require tenants to move. One of the housing problems that SDSAF Members have told us about when we meet them is downsizing. Many of us are living in houses which are now too big but is there somewhere the right size to go to? What happens to rooms full of furniture, ornaments, and memories. Is anything valuable? Whom can we trust? Recently, we have had a problem shared with us about elderly tenants losing their homes. More to come.

**Swanley Local Group** We want to start a local group in Swanley to look at the redevelopment of the town. We need to make sure that the concerns of older people are taken into consideration before the builders move in.

Local Groups can do some very straight forward practical work too! For example, when SDSAF comes to a village fete near you, it would be really helpful if some Members can come along to raise our gazebo. To be comfortable, we need four people to help with this task at the beginning of the day and again at the end. The last such event of the year will be Sevenoaks Lights on November 25th. It's a lovely evening, with lots going on and well worth coming to. Helping us set up and clear up would be really helpful. Next year, we will put the list of events we hope to attend into a newsletter so that everyone has the dates well in advance.



**Toilet Problems** Jean Bentley from New Ash Green highlighted this issue in Newsletter 23. Quite rightly, she pointed out that the decline in numbers of public loos is a real problem for many people. Local Councils are not required by

law to provide and maintain public toilets and have chosen to save money by not having them. But local authorities do many things that they are not required by law to do and so the lack of support for loos is a straight forward political decision. If you think that they should choose to have them then you need to campaign. Jean thinks that SDSAF could start an Issue Group on Public Toilets by talking to Patient Participation Groups in the District. It's not a glamorous subject but if you are imprisoned at home because there's nowhere for you 'to go' when you go out then email Jean at [jeanbentley51@gmail.com](mailto:jeanbentley51@gmail.com) or via the contacts on the back page. Jean would be particularly pleased to hear from our 55 Ash and New Ash Green Members and is happy to organise a get together. If you would like to campaign in your village, get in touch with us and we will help you.

**KCC Consultation on Bus Services** On 28th October, SDSAF Members Veronica McGannon, Brian Gasson, Diana Beamish, Jean Bentley and Frank McConnell went to County Hall to discuss the issue of bus services with County officers and County Councillors. We had been invited by KCC officials because they had become aware of the strength of our Seniors Action Forum and that we spend a lot of time listening to our Members and the public at the events we attend. There's a lot of information from the meeting which will feature in the next newsletter but please be aware that a **Bus Transport Bill** going through Parliament right now. This is very important if buses are important to you. Find out what you can about it and write to your MP with your point of view. **In November**, a User Service Questionnaire on buses is coming out. We must ensure that as many people as possible respond to it. **In December**, there will be a public meeting at County Hall on Transport which we should attend.

**Cheaper Fuel this Winter?** Fuel companies do not get a great press but even so people are so often afraid of changing their supplier. If you lived between two shops each selling exactly the same loaf of bread would you shop at the one that charges you 20 per cent more than the other one? We waste an awful lot of money buying our gas and electricity from companies who charge too much. The District Council's Switch and Save service is really worth looking at. <http://www.sevenoaksswitchandsave.co.uk>

**Kent County Council Consultations** The Chairman, Frank McConnell, met with senior officers from Kent CC in October to discuss the lack of available information on the cost of consultations. SDSAF Members want to know if anyone pays any heed to what the public say. Frank was told that there is a move in KCC to show that they are listening by highlighting the differences between initial proposals and final decisions. SDSAF would be happy with a 'You Said - We Did' approach which shows that changes have been made because of consultations.

**World Mental Health Day 2016** ... on Monday 10 October had the theme "Dignity in Mental Health". Contact [hello@westkentmind.org.uk](mailto:hello@westkentmind.org.uk) or on 01732 744950

Forthcoming Events

Tue 29 Nov

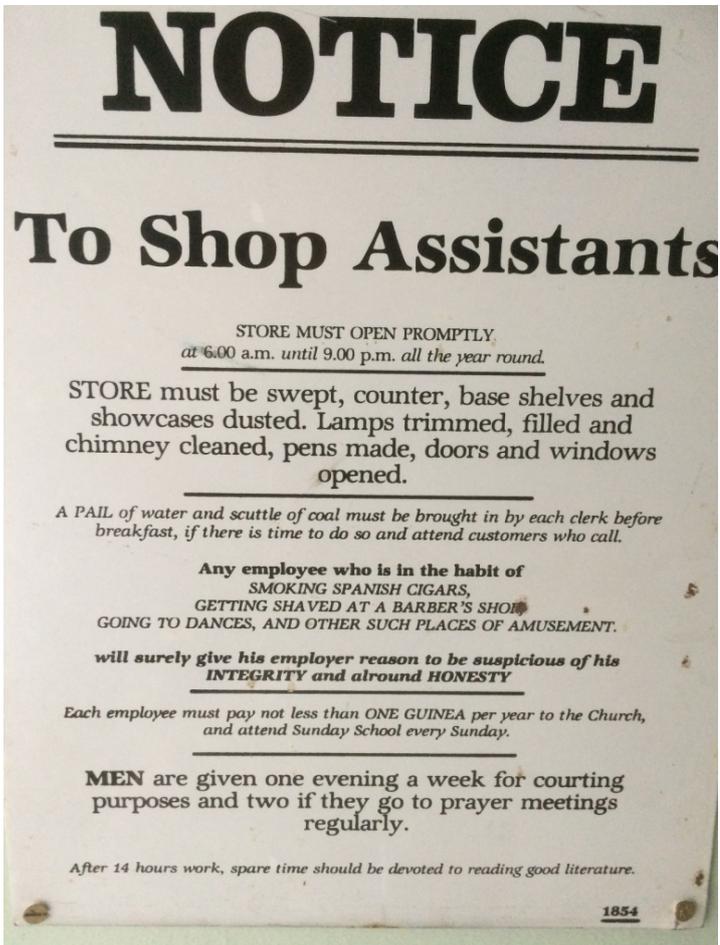
Mental Health Awareness

Tue 6 Dec

Suicide Awareness & Prevention

Tue 24 Jan  
Tue 24 Jan  
Fri 27 Jan  
Fri 10 Feb

Jasmine Tonbridge  
Life Coaching Sevenoaks  
Mental Health Awareness  
Suicide Awareness & Prevention



## Conditions of Employment

From 1854, comes this staff room rule poster – if they had staff rooms of course! They certainly had rules.



Was it Really Like this in the 60s?

**SDSAF at the Sevenoaks Lights on November 25th** Come along and hello to us in Sevenoaks High Street. Help us put up the gazebo around 5pm and/or take it down later. Tell us what's bothering you right now.

**Should I go to A&E? or Ask the Chemist?** We all know that hospital resources are poor and that unnecessary attendance at A&E makes life very difficult for people who have a genuine emergency. So how do you know whether you should go to A&E, the Doctor or the Chemist for help and advice? **It can be difficult and in an emergency, don't hesitate! Call 999.**

Following a survey, the Academy of Royal Medical Colleges (which represents all 21 Royal medical colleges) has publicised a list of 40 treatments that have little or no value. Of five hundred doctors surveyed; 83 per cent had prescribed or carried out unnecessary treatments. 60% doctors felt pressurised by patients proscripting

treatments because they feared litigation. 20% of cases involved antibiotics, 16 per cent related to X-rays, and 14 per cent to CT scans or blood tests.

**Are You Entitled to Extra Winter Help?** Winter can be a tough time. But there's help available, especially for those on low incomes...

**Winter Fuel Payments.** If you were born on or before 5 May 1953, regardless of your income, you're eligible for the up-to-£300 one-off winter fuel payment. If you get certain benefits, e.g. state pension, pension credit or jobseeker's allowance, you'll usually get it automatically – otherwise you may have to claim.

**Warm Home Discount.** If you were on pension credit on 10 Jul, you'll get an automatic one-off £140 rebate on your electricity bill sometime between Oct and Apr, unless you're with some smaller energy firms. If you've a prepay or pay-as-you-go meter you won't get it automatically, apply before 28 Feb 17.

**Cold Weather Payments.** Anyone on certain benefits, e.g. specific income support/jobseeker's allowance/pension credit, gets £25 for every 7 consecutive days the temperature goes below zero after 1 Nov. It's paid automatically.

Choosing between heating and eating? If you're seriously behind, or in general financial hardship, you may be eligible for special tariffs/help. Try the Energy Saving Trust on 0300 123 1234 for England. Ask Sevenoaks District Council for information on Housing and Energy Grants and Debt Help.



*Thanks to all our partners*

**Contacting SDSAF Committee People (Please note the changes):**

Chairman	Frank McConnell		frank@frankmcconnell.com
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Committee Members:	Eileen Murray Giles, Jean Bentley, Anna Durrant, Brian Gasson		
Membership Secretary	Roger Bryan	07470 201703	roger.bryan@me.com

Write to us via Membership Secretary, Roger Bryan, 10 Greenside, Swanley, BR8 7ER  
**SDSAF Membership Forms are available online:** [http://sdsaf.org/?page\\_id=158](http://sdsaf.org/?page_id=158)

**Would you like to edit this newsletter? Do you have journalism/writing skills? Get in touch – we need you!**