

**Sevenoaks District
Seniors Action Forum**

Working together in the interests of people aged 50 plus

Email: comms@sdsaf.org.uk

Message from the Chair

I had to go into my loft recently to access a few bits. It was a day when spirits were a tad low and I felt in need of some spiritual guidance. My eyes fell upon a box with some tapes in it - the reel to reel ones we rarely see these days. The one on the top happened to be a tape of my Mum rehearsing some songs for a charity concert. It was recorded 46 years ago in her kitchen.

It was a very emotional experience to hear my Mum singing. She passed away over 20 years ago. The first track she sang was "Count your blessings one by one" and in the second "If I can help somebody as I pass along then my living will not be in vain".

The guidance was loud and clear - have an attitude of gratitude and think of others. In no time at all the tracks had been recorded on a mobile phone and circulated via WhatsApp to inspire family and friends all over the globe.

Could my Mum ever have imagined the impact those few minutes in her kitchen would have 46 years later? Our smallest actions, the things we do and say (and sing!) can be very far reaching. Let's keep on doing whatever good deeds we can with love and gratitude.

Eileen Murray Giles

Singalong for Seniors

The Forum would like to send our heartfelt thanks to Jean Bentley and Frank McConnell for performing a fantastic Singalong on 13th February. Both performers proved without doubt that New Ash Green's Got Talent!

Approximately 60 people Zoomed in to hear an eclectic, musical extravaganza of songs spanning many decades. The lyrics had been sent to participants in advance so that the audience could either sing along at home or simply sit back and enjoy the entertainment and nostalgia. We were delighted that the carers at Nesbit House residential home at Badgers Mount helped some of their residents to join in too.



The Singalong was just the tonic we needed at the end of a long, cold, snow-bound week and the interval provided the opportunity for lively conversations to take place between friends and neighbours. The chance for community interaction was obvious and enabled people across the District, in both towns and outlying villages to connect with one another in a wonderful, uplifting evening. Given the favourable feedback we received the Forum will explore what other 'virtual' events we could offer so that members can interact with us and each other.

Thanks must also go to our Chair, Eileen Murray Giles, who so skillfully mastered the complexities of Zoom at our first large-scale event, proving that who dares wins!

What a difference a Year makes.....It could be argued that everything has changed but nothing has changed. We have not yet seen the back of the Covid pandemic and its restrictions on socialising and leisure. There is now some comfort to be taken from the declining case rates across Kent, despite the mutation of the virus in December. Vaccination clinics seem to be working well, in the main. If you have had the Covid jab, however, you still need to follow the guidance:



Citizens Advice Edenbridge & Westerham

If you need advice you can contact Citizens Advice Edenbridge & Westerham via:

- the free local number: 0808 278 7962
- the email address: enquiries@edenbridgecab.cabnet.org.uk
- the website: <http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/edenbridge-and-westerham>

Praise

- West Kent Housing: building a ramp to allow an immobile tenant to sit in her garden in her wheelchair. Being fair and compassionate landlords e.g., granting some free rent to a bereaved relative to allow time for house clearance
- Teachers : For working so hard to manage both online and face to face teaching and all the parents who are home schooling
- Mike's Taxis, Borough Green, for offering to local people half price taxi fares to vaccination centres and a third discount on fares to other medical appointments.
- The marvellous work done by our two local Hospices – The Ellenor Foundation and Hospice in the Weald – who provide a range of services.
- All those who are providing food to food banks and clothes to those in need
- Kall Kwik printers in Sevenoaks for going the extra mile to produce our Newsletters.
- Sevenoaks District Council Health Liaison Board for monitoring the health services around the District

Disappointment

✚ The National Trust are to be applauded for their arrangements for visiting Knole Park in Sevenoaks which has enabled people to take exercise in a lovely, open space. However, it was with dismay that we discovered that the Brewhouse and toilets have had to be closed because people were not sticking to the rules. It is truly sad that the selfish actions of a minority have led to this development.

“The Silver Line” operates the only confidential, free helpline for older people across the UK that’s open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days of the year. Call anytime on **0800 4 70 80 90**.

As we get older it’s not as easy to stay in touch with people but you still want to tell someone about your day, share a thought or a joke, or talk about a problem. Being able to have a conversation with someone about the big or small things in life is a very important part of anyone’s day. 225,000 older people often go for a week without speaking to anyone.

People can call The Silver Line for just for a chat, to say Good Night or Good Morning to someone, or tell us how their day was. Others call for information, seek advice about something, or share a concern or worry.

The specially trained Helpline team can:

- offer conversation and friendship
- provide information and advice
- link callers to local groups and services.
- refer people on to receive regular friendship calls.
- protect and support older people who are suffering abuse and neglect.
- The Helpline is always open and they are at the end of the phone 24 hours, seven days a week, ready to take calls.

If you want to find out more about this excellent charity details can be found on <https://www.thesilverline.org.uk/> or give them a call on **0800 4 70 80 90**.

West Kent Mind

Staying connected in these challenging times is so important. Local mental health charity West Kent Mind offers a Digital Befriending service if you have some IT knowledge and want to learn how to use Zoom.

<https://westkentmind.org.uk/what-we-offer/digital-befriending>

There is also wide range of social and activity groups which are currently operating online and open to all. For more information on these services, and for help & support visit www.westkentmind.org.uk or email angela.riley@westkentmind.org.uk

Mental Health Matters

If you feel in need of emotional support in these challenging times, a helpline service called ‘Mental Health Matters’ is available via a free phone number (0800 107 0160) for residents registered with a GP in Kent. You can self-refer and talk with a friendly trained adviser for up to 20 minutes in a day. There is no charge for the service which is also available to carers and concerned family and friends

Scams – Covid Vaccinations We have stated many times in our Newsletter that there seems no limit to what scammers will do to try and swindle the public. Please be aware that Covid vaccinations are free. You do not have to pay for them, so if you get a text or an email asking you for any personal details or cash ***please do not respond to them.*** When it is your turn to receive the vaccination the NHS will contact you and allocate a time and date for your appointment.

Basic Store Cupboard Ideas

The Dietetics Department at Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust gave us some suggestions of items to keep in your larder or store cupboard. The recent bad weather illustrated how important it is to have some food in stock, but you may wish to consider keeping some of these items in your kitchen to ensure you have a variety of different food available. The other thing to add is to ensure you have a stock of your favourite food and give yourself a treat every now and again!

Meat, fish and alternatives

Canned meat or fish, e.g. corned beef, ham, sardines, pilchards, salmon, tuna, stews, curries, mince
Ambient ready-meals
Chickpeas, lentils, beans/baked beans
Packets of tofu

Milk, dairy and alternatives

Long-life, dried, evaporated or condensed milk
Cans, packets or pots of milk pudding
Cheese in squeezable tubes

Cereal and starchy food

Breakfast cereals, porridge, breakfast drinks
Crispbread, flatbreads, crackers, oatcakes, biscuits
Pasta, rice, spaghetti
Instant mashed or canned potatoes

Fruit and Vegetables

Tinned fruit and vegetables such as tomatoes, sweetcorn, pears and mandarins
Packets and pots of fruit, including dried fruit

Drinks

Drinking chocolate and malted milk drinks such as Horlicks and Ovaltine
Long life fruit juice, fruit squash enriched with Vitamin C

Other

Rich fruit loaf, tinned sponge puddings
Peanut butter
Cans, jars and dried soups and sauces
Stock cubes, meat and yeast extract
Herbs and spices
Sugar

Freezer Ideas

Extra portions of homemade meals
Frozen meat, kebabs, Quorn and fish
Ready meals such as stews, casseroles, lasagne, fish pie, pizza, korma/curries
Fish fingers, breaded fish/chicken
Bhajis, samosas, pakoras, falafel
Liquid stock such as vegetable, meat or fish
Frozen chips, potato scones, mashed and baked potatoes
Bread, rolls, bagels, tortilla wraps, chapattis, naan bread
Fruit and vegetables
Ice cream, frozen yoghurt, frozen desserts

Special Considerations

Keep Hydrated....

Good hydration can reduce the risk of falls, constipation, urine infections (UTIs), poor memory and concentration.

Aim to have 8-10 cups/glasses a day – this is around 1.6 – 2 litres.

This can include tea, coffee, fruit juice, fruit squash, milk, milky drinks, soups, milkshakes and water

Falls Prevention & Alarms

We can fall and injure ourselves at any age but it is undeniable that the risk of falling increases as we get older. Our physical strength and sensory abilities are likely to weaken with age which may affect our balance. Many hospitalisations are as a result of a fall. Seniors often wonder what would happen if they fell at home, especially if they live alone and maybe have a health condition such as high blood pressure, epilepsy or arthritis. A variety of providers offer a service which offers reassurance to seniors and those who care about them. These range from neat, waterproof watches which you wear 24 hours a day and if ever you need help at home you press the watchface or there are pendants which you can wear to summon help. If you feel that these would benefit you it might be worthwhile speaking to your GP to discuss your strength and balance to explore whether they can be improved.

Store Cupboard Recipe

Spam Hash is an example of one of the meals you could make from a Store Cupboard essential. The recipe comes from Ration Book Recipes. It is easy to forget that people had to survive on very little during war time and did not have the benefit of fridges, so tinned goods were, and still are a good standby. This was when SPAM was chopped pork and ham and not unwanted email messages!

Ingredients:

- 1 tin SPAM chopped into small cubes
- 5 potatoes peeled washed and cut into chunks
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 tomato, chopped small
- Knob of margarine (or a small quantity of cooking oil)



Method:

- Boil the potatoes until just cooked. Drain and allow to cool.
- Saute the onion in the margarine for 5 minutes or until soft.
- Crush the cooked potatoes into smaller chunks and add to the onion, together with the tomato and cubes of SPAM.
- Fry for a few minutes, stir well, then turn down the heat.
- Cover the frying pan and simmer for 10 minutes.
- Stir occasionally and add a little water if the mixture is sticking.
- Serve the hash with baked beans or vegetable of your choice.

Age UK Sevenoaks & Tonbridge 'Virtual' Exercise Sessions

Due to the pandemic there is no possibility of the Pop In cafes resuming any time soon but this has not stopped Sue Larken from reaching out to carry on her exercise classes. Sue is now holding 'virtual exercise classes 'on-line', so if you are interested in participating in these please email her at suelarken@ageuksevenoaksandtonbridge.org.uk when she will send you a link to join in.

Sevenoaks Markets

Two new vendors are now offering their produce at the markets in Sevenoaks. On Wednesdays East Point Fish will be bringing fresh fish and seafood directly from Lowestoft. On Saturdays The Cheese Pod will be found in Blighs selling a wide variety of cheeses.



Motoring & Roads



Lighting Up Time!

Have you checked your headlights, side lights and brake lights recently? With fewer journeys being made and the postponement of MOTs last year, it might be worth checking, or getting someone to check for you, that all the lights on your car are working. During several trips on the A21 recently, when there was mist and spray, it became clear that there are many vehicles on the road which need attention, so please be aware.

So why not take a minute before starting your journey to inspect your vehicle to ensure that other road users can see you in what can sometimes be challenging weather conditions.

Blue Badge Applications

If you have a Blue Badge and it is due for renewal in the near future, it is advisable to make your application in plenty of time. We have been advised by a Forum member that the form you need to complete has recently changed. Coupled with the fact that administration could be delayed due to Covid restrictions the earlier you can submit your request the better.

Pot Holes

After a few days of snow and icy roads the roads seem to have taken another hammering, with quite a number of potholes reappearing. Please don't just drive over them or moan about the bumps in the road: report them to Kent Highways so that they know about them and can get them sorted. Potholes pose a risk not only to motorists but cyclists and pedestrians. The process is easy if you are on line via the following link, <https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem>, which not only handles complaints about roads but also pavements and traffic signals. Alternatively you can ring KCC on **03000 418181**.

Finance

National Savings & Investments: Our last Newsletter prompted some interesting feedback from people who contacted National Savings about their Premium Bonds and savings accounts. They reported long waits for telephone calls to be answered, and a less than helpful attitude for people who did not have internet access. While we have every sympathy for companies who have had to adapt their services due to the pandemic we would have hoped that by this point in time sufficient resources were available for organisations to boost or adapt their workforce to provide a reasonably acceptable and responsive service.

Kent County Council Council Tax Increase

Council tax for the year 2021/22 will increase by 5 %. The highlights of the proposals voted for by Councillors are as follows:

- The Council proposes a £97.7m increase in spending on council services, including £5.5m for adult social care packages, £2.8m for home-to-school transport for SEN pupils, £3.2m to cover increased demand for children's social work and disabled children's services.
- This increase in spending is offset by £61.7m which includes savings from efficiencies, transformation and policy choices, additional income; as well as £22m from reserves.

Power of Attorney Applications

One of our members made an application to appoint attorneys for both Property and Finance and Health last November. They are still waiting for the process to be completed. It is still not known when the process will be complete. Failure to appoint an attorney in a timely manner could have serious consequences for some people who can no longer manage their own affairs. Attorneys are given powers to manage other people's affairs and make decisions on their behalf. Therefore if you have been thinking of appointing an attorney you would be well advised to do so at the earliest opportunity.

Spring is in the Air!

The days are getting longer and Spring is nearly here, the snowdrops are out and crocuses, primulas, early primroses and daffodils are all beginning to come through.

Spring is the period of renewal and regeneration and we can now look forward more optimistically to a better 2021.

We are planning more social events, like our vintage bus trips and look forward to attending village fetes and fayres again. In the meantime, please keep in touch with us and send in any ideas as to how we can improve the lives of Seniors around the District. We we keen to hear from our most important resource: YOU, our members!



Join Dementia Research

[Join Dementia Research](#) helps people with dementia, their carers, or anyone interested in dementia research to be matched to studies taking place in their area. The service is managed by the National Institute for Health Research in partnership with Alzheimer's Society, Alzheimer's Research UK and Alzheimer Scotland. It helps to recruit people to dementia studies taking place across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Why should I sign up to Join Dementia Research? Many people who choose to take part in dementia research do so because they value the opportunity to make a difference.

For people with dementia, taking part in research often helps them to gain a better understanding of their condition and to have their health monitored more closely. Many find it a very positive experience and feel they are making a worthwhile contribution to the future of dementia care and treatment.

Join Dementia Research represents an easy way to register your interest in taking part in a study. The studies that are listed on the service are a mixture of clinical trials of new drugs and other studies, including improving understanding of care practice or looking into links between lifestyle and dementia risk.

All of the studies have ethical approval, which requires the researchers to submit their work to be reviewed by an independent ethics committee. The committee ensures that the study is well designed, and that the rights, safety and well-being of research participants will be protected.

If there are any studies that look like they will suit you, the study teams will contact you to discuss what is involved. You will have the opportunity to ask as many questions as you need to before deciding whether or not to participate. There is no obligation to take part if you are matched to a study. More details can be found VIA the following link: <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/research/take-part-research/join-dementia-research>

SDSAF Connectivity and Information Technology Survey Update

In our last newsletter we asked for your views on computer use and information technology. We would like to thank all those that responded. The results were fairly compatible with other mainstream published research, but with some surprises. Three main groupings emerged (in no particular order):

1 (>10%)	2 (20%)	3 (70%)
People who have no equipment or access and don't want to have it.	People with little or no access and don't feel competent and have fears about using computers, but willing to learn.	The very competent who use computers and other media for a wide variety of things.

Less than 10% of respondents felt that computers were not for them, and they are not alone. Research from OFCOM indicates that there are 5 million people in this category in the U.K. The Forum will be campaigning strenuously to ensure that this group is not marginalised, and that other means of communication are always on offer. We want to reassure members who get their Newsletter by post that we have no intention of changing this.

About 20% of replies were from those with little or no internet usage, who perceive it as too complicated, mentioning difficulties with viewing small screens and keyboards. Worries about security and in particular scams were frequently mentioned. Quite a few members declared that they are dependent on friends and relatives for help, but largely it's because they just don't know how to use it. The 'technical' jargon used often seems to be a language in its own right and to the uninitiated difficult to understand.

Many members would like help and training. This is fairly widely available, but not well-publicised. Training is available in some Kent libraries but has had to cease for the time being because of Covid.

More than 70% of replies were from competent and frequent users of the internet, who had multiple means of access. 52% of those members have Smartphones and 46% own tablets.

The primary use is for emails or searching for information. 54% of on line responders shop on-line and 21% use their equipment for games or puzzles.

Prize Draw for I.T. Survey Participants

The lucky winner of a £25 Marks and Spencer voucher went to Janet Payne of Crockenhill. Janet says she feels very fortunate to have worked in jobs that taught her how to use technology. She remembers the days when computers were on big disks in sterile rooms and feels very sad that many seniors feel marginalised because they do not know how to use computers. She now uses her desktop to manage many aspects of her life including shopping, attending meetings, playing bridge and improving her Spanish. Janet, together with her family, loves gardening, horses and the outdoor life and she has campaigned for improved sports facilities in the north of the district.

Thank you Janet and everyone who completed the survey and helping us to understand how our members engage with technology.

Keeping in Touch

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

If you would like to receive the Newsletter in large print please let us know