

MERTON SENIORS

Action Support Group

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THE PENSIONERS MANIFESTO

After months of debate and discussion involving hundreds of pensioners' organisations across the country and culminating in the 2004 Pensioners' Parliament, the first ever Pensioners' Manifesto will be launched at the Mass Lobby of Parliament on September 8th. The Manifesto is unique. If adopted, it could put an end to pensioner poverty and help us to create a society where being older no longer means being treated like second class citizens, taking us a step closer towards dignity, security and fulfilment in older age. But we have to work for it.

Every MP has received a copy of the Manifesto, but we must also reach out to the wider community. Trade unions, schools, women's, ethnic and other groups all have members who will benefit one day if the pensioners' demands are met by the government of the day.

In the run up to the local and general elections every candidate will be asked to support the Manifesto. For us, this means we must be constantly writing and talking to our MPs and to other candidates, reminding them not to underestimate the power of the pensioners 11m votes.



STOP PRESS

Roger Casale MP for Wimbledon and Siobhan McDonagh MP for Mitcham and Morden have agreed to meet us on September 8th.

Please be there!

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MANIFESTO KEY PROPOSALS ON PAGE 4

MASS LOBBY OF PARLIAMENT WEDNESDAY 8th SEPTEMBER

September the 8th is crunch day for Britain's 11 million pensioners. It is then we will be meeting our Members of Parliament in a

mass lobby. The manifesto has many demands. These demands are necessary because for the past two and a half decades politicians have neglected Pensioners. Show our MPs that we are no longer

prepared to be ignored by turning up in force on

September.8th.

House of Commons 12 noon, or join the groups travelling from Wimbledon or Morden Stations at 11.am

♦ Next meeting

♦ THURSDAY

♦ 7TH OCTOBER

2 - 4 PM AT THE CIVIC CENTRE, MORDEN

HEALTH CARE! IS THERE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE ELDERLY?

Speakers:

Sally Rickard and Elinor Needham, Sutton & Merton Primary Care Trust

Warm Front

At our last meeting we heard a speaker from the government funded initiative, Warm Front, about keeping warm in winter.

The Warm Front Grant focuses on households with the greatest health risks - older people, families with chil-



Caption describing picture or graphic.

dren under sixteen and people who are disabled or have a long-term illness. Warm Front Plus is aimed at people who are sixty or over.

The following people may be able to claim a grant of up to £2500 under Warm Front Plus.

Householders who are sixty or over and receiving one or more of the following benefits:

Pension Credit

Income support

Council tax benefit

Housing benefit

Just call freephone

0800-731-2817

Change of MAP Leadership

Long standing Chair of MAP, Jim McKinnon, has resigned and their new Chairperson is Myrtle Agutter. We wish Jim well for the future, thank him for all his hard work in helping to set up our umbrella group and hope that he won't completely sever

his ties with the pensioners movement.

Myrtle, who is on our committee, is already working hard for MAP. It is her in-



tention to swell their numbers over the coming months and continue with the good work Jim has done in the past.

You can contact Myrtle on 0208-395-6167

MAP PUBLIC MEETING – THURSDAY, 16TH SEPTEMBER, 2 PM AT THE CIVIC CENTRE, MORDEN

Merton Seniors Action Report

Merton Seniors' participation in the very successful Celebrating Age Festival in July included setting up a colourful display of materials provided by affiliated groups. This was very useful publicity for us and hopefully will result in more people joining groups which attracted their interest.

The Chairperson and Press Officer held a meeting with the editor of



the local Guardian, who prom-

ised to look into the idea of a monthly column for pensioners. The Chairperson has met the Finance Officer to discuss April's above inflation home care and meals on wheels charges. He also queried the high use of agency care workers. Following our meeting with the Assessment Team we are involved in the ongoing work of simplifying assessment.

NHS – IS THERE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE ELDERLY?

In March 2001, a Scrutiny Group was set up to look at discrimination against the elderly in the NHS. This group has met regularly, has discussed and taken action on many aspects of the treatment of older people, ranging from physical neglect, even abuse, to screening services, infections, quality of food and cleanliness in hospitals and patronising behaviour from NHS staff towards elderly patients.

Examples of shortcomings in the NHS are not hard to find and are illustrated in the following examples. Alice, a diabetic, was re-

cently discharged from hospital, unable to climb the stairs, unable to go to the toilet unaided. She received no advice from the hospital and no after care for six days, until, growing weaker and weaker, she contacted her doctor, who had not been informed of her discharge from the hospital. Her doctor immediately arranged after care, including nurses, occupational and physiotherapy, with the result that Alice made great progress. She has nothing but praise for the nurses and other care workers when they finally came. Daisy had a different experience;

she had been very seriously ill and in hospital for months, but on being discharged, had immediate after care which in her words was excellent, marred only by one carer, (an agency employee?) who stole and was abusive, swearing and shouting at Daisy. Both Alice and Daisy, though sick, are the kind of women who will complain and fight for better services, but what could happen to those more timid people who find themselves in this situation?

Come to the meeting on October 7th to put your views and questions about care of the elderly.

Find out more about the Scrutiny Group at the Public Meeting on October 7th

Asylum Seekers: The Truth

Many of us are misled by reports that asylum seekers are flooding the country and living off the backs of the tax payer. Nothing could be further from the truth. More than half of the nurses recruited to the NHS come from overseas. Many refugees are professionals such as doctors and teachers who are in short supply. The Home office says migrants contribute

£2.5 billion to the economy which far outweighs the cost of support for asylum seekers who are not allowed to work.

One myth is that Britain takes more asylum seekers than other countries. Within Europe, Britain comes tenth in terms of asylum seekers' applications, and we take far less than poor countries such as

Tanzania and Guinea. Pakistan and Iran take one third of the World's 12 million refugees. Another myth is that they get large cash state handouts. The truth is that hundreds of asylum seekers have been refused financial assistance. What cash they get is 70% of basic income support - less than £40 per week.

Baffled by Forms

Do you ever wonder who writes the forms sent out by National and Local government! These forms are usually incomprehensible and seem designed to make you tear them up and say forget it, it isn't worth the hassle. We had a meeting with two members of

Merton's assessment team, who, though sympathetic, well educated and very intelligent, had little understanding of the problems elderly people have in filling in forms. They hadn't grasped the fact that many

older people have never had bank accounts and often can't understand credit and debit.

It's not that we're senile: we're just a different generation.



MSASG The umbrella organisation for Merton's Elderly

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PENSIONERS' MANIFESTO - KEY PROPOSALS

State pension should be raised to the level of the Guarantee credit of £105.45 per week.

State pension should rise every year in line with average earnings.

The 25p a week age addition at 80 should be increased to £25.

The annual Christmas bonus should be equal to one week's full state pension.

Winter Fuel Allowance should be £300.

Pensioners should receive free annual health checks and all health care and treatment should be given without delay, free of charge and based on clinical need. All long term care and accommodation should be provided free.

Carer's Allowance should be paid in addition to state pension.

Free nationwide travel on buses, coaches, ferries, trams, tubes/metro and trains.

Council tax should be abolished and replaced with a fairer system based on government grants, business and income tax.

Legislation should prevent age discrimination; no increase in retirement age.

STREETWATCH

Concerned about litter, graffiti, fly-tipping, dog fouling, overflowing litterbins?

Then join Streetwatch, the Council led scheme that encourages Merton residents to care about, have pride in, and take responsibility for their own communities.

Contact 020 8545 3077 for more information.



ASIAN ELDERLY OF MERTON

Founded in 1980 the Asian Elderly Group of Merton is one of the lead organisations looking after Merton's elderly Asians. Funded by the London Borough of Merton it holds sessions on Tuesdays & Wednesdays at the Taylor Road Day Centre and the Merton Hall Drop in Centre on Thursdays.

They have social and cultural activities ranging from day outings to places of interest including the seaside, cultural and seasonal events and musical evenings.

At the two day centres you can get social

worker advice, listen to music, work with arts and crafts, get involved in exercise and health sessions and have computer internet access.

There are English classes, and presentations and speakers from various organisations. There is also an ethnic meals service.

The first point of contact is at the groups office in the Wimbledon Community Centre, 28, St George's Road SW 19. It is there where all the information is collated for the benefit of the elderly and disabled people who due to lack of local knowledge can-

not access the resources that are available to them. The telephone numbers are 020-8944-9545 and 020-8947-5655

