

LPF Newsletter

(for the “retired” and “about-to-retire”)

January 2021

Covid-19 Special Edition 6

Est. 1986 Registered Charity No 1158175



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Dear Members, Friends, and Others,

What a year it has been!

Perhaps like me, you started 2020 in an optimistic mood, feeling positive, futuristic, with a vision of better things ahead, but come March and our hopes were dashed. Perhaps we, or someone we knew lost a close friend or relative to the horrible virus. Nevertheless, we must be grateful that we have come through to welcome another Christmas and New Year. Some people lost their sources of income, and a few their homes. The word “virtually” took on a new meaning, and became an important element in most of our lives, either linking us to the whole world or else making us feel more excluded and marginalised than ever. Please look at page 7 and see how you can help Healthwatch Lewisham – concerned as always about effective delivery of health services to all in the borough – gather evidence on how this “digital” revolution is affecting us. **Please also complete and return the enclosed LPF survey.** Give your contact details if you want it entered into the Prize Draw at our virtual Health Fayre (see overleaf) and also tick the boxes to say if you want to become a member of LPF are willing to be contacted by Healthwatch or want to be kept informed of any potential LPF project on helping more people to get on-line and build their confidence.

Despite all the physical and mental plus virtual challenges we have managed to keep you inspired and informed, with thanks to City Bridge Trust who have funded these extra large and colourful newsletters. The two members of staff have toiled relentlessly to keep you motivated, and have moved the metaphorical mountains to overcome the challenges they encountered where others might have stumbled and fallen.

Although we have not had much physical contact with you, except for one visit to the Horniman Gardens and these newsletters, everything has been virtual. And, thanks to our “nugget” staff, we had a successful three day virtual Pensioners Day event, which was a fabulous first for the Forum. The Guest Speakers were excellent, and they were happy to be a part of us. If

you have access to YouTube all sessions will soon be viewable (uploading is a task that is taking longer than expected, but keep a watch out on our website).

Since we have been under lockdown we have not had the Monday Project activities – the manager of St Mauritius House carefully looking out for the health and well-being of her residents and needing to observe the COVID rules very strictly. We were preparing for a return when came news that we had to be locked up even longer. However some walks, chair exercises and cookery classes, have continued—virtually.

Our Manager, Tracey, is in the process of organising our January Health Fayre, which promises to be information packed, just look at the plans overleaf and see if you can find a way to join some of these Zoom sessions.

So now we have come to the end of the year we must go forward with hope, and, although any positivity you nurtured may have dissipated, your vocabulary has expanded - vaccine, COVID19, volunteering, Coronavirus, inequalities, shielding, FOOD BANKS, yes food banks... We have been really pleased to be able to work in collaboration with some of these splendid organisations to distribute our extra newsletters around the Borough.

On behalf of our Trustees, we take this opportunity to thank you for your continuing support. We hope that you had as MERRY a CHRISTMAS as possible in the circumstances, and trust it is not too late to now wish you A HAPPIER NEW YEAR.

My final words are to advise you that, as the weather becomes more intense you need to keep yourself warm night and day. At least keep the areas that you use the most very warm, and wear clothes that are conducive to the possibly bitter weather conditions. (Read what our friends in SELCE are saying on page 3.)

Twenty twenty-one here we come. We don't know what the future holds for us, but we must be determined and visionary.

My favourite motto: VISION, VIGOUR, VICTORY!

Best wishes, *Bridgit A Sam-Bailey* Chairman

Do you have an e-mail contact address? We are committed to the paper newsletter to go to all members by post (unless anyone asks to receive it only by e-mail). However some items crop up between mailings that you might be interested in and if we have an e-mail we can let you know about them.

Our list is totally confidential and will not be shared with any other body.

E-mail info@lpforum.org to benefit from this free service.



Health Fayre—it's happening but differently— on Wednesday 27 January—please read on...

Please join us at our virtual Health Fayre due to be held on Wednesday 27th January 2021. You can drop in and out to different sessions running from 10am – 4pm. You can either register via Eventbrite or see Zoom meeting ID and passcode below. Details of what session is when will be published on our website as soon as they are confirmed.



Theme of the event – this has to be the Covid-19 pandemic, the biggest public health emergency the NHS service as had to deal with in its 72 year history.

- The impact of the lockdown has seen an increase in feelings of isolation, depression, and loneliness amongst the most vulnerable groups in our society, mainly elderly. Lockdown is essential to preserve our physical health but is laying up trouble in store as far as the **mental health** of people of all ages is concerned.
- The pandemic has in many ways revealed and exacerbated **longstanding health disparities** affecting the BAME community and other gaps in our national care services, as it brings to the fore how many have been failed in the government response to the pandemic. Health services are moving online and many of our elders do not even have access to internet, let alone being able to book online to see their GP.
- And now **the vaccines** are here with breath-taking speed and are being rolled out in the UK. They promise, ultimately, a world-wide rescue package, but myths and misinformation, fears and fake news abound. There are concerns about effectiveness and possible side effects which continue to emerge each day in a fast-changing world.

However, with all that said and in the midst of all these uncertainties, LPF's aspiration for this one-day event is to bring some clarity and an opportunity to question face to face (albeit over the internet) local health leaders and experts, who will be presenting the facts that allow you to make an informed decision. We will also have a chance discuss the pandemic's impact and consider possible solutions to the inequalities it has exposed, seeking a better "new normal".



Do you "tweet"? Follow us @LPForum and check out the Chatroom on www.LPForum.org.uk and email us for an invitation to sign up.



Healthwatch Lewisham will be present and we will be hearing from some specialist speakers

- Cllr Chris Best, Cabinet Member for Adult Health and Social Care:

- sharing information about how the Covid-19 vaccine is being rolled out in Lewisham
- telling us how anyone can become a community champion and get involved through volunteering.



- A doctor from the Clinical Commissioning Group who will be answering questions and concerns people may have about vaccine effectiveness.



- Jan Shortt, General Secretary of the National Pensioners Convention, who will be outlining the long-standing issues around care services – exacerbated as a result of Covid-19. Even before the pandemic the NPC were working on their report – featured in earlier newsletters, "Goodbye Cinderella" – and their proposed solutions are now more important than ever.
- We will be discussing issues around medical notes, DNR orders and concerns that are emerging around judgements such as "very frail" appearing on someone's records with no-one admitting to making the entry.
- Then on the lighter side:
 - staying healthy and activities during lockdown,
 - sharing your lived experiences of the lockdown, and
 - how to stay warm through winter.



Link [HERE](#) to join in via Zoom at the specified time.
Meeting ID 865 1878 6644 Passcode 767435
(If you encounter that revolving circle it might well be resolved if you just try again.)

To join via a landline call 020 3901 7895 or 020 3481 5240 and when prompted enter the **Meeting ID 865 1878 6644 and # Passcode 767435.**
(If you have problems phone 020 8690 7869 and we can try to assist.)

STAY AT HOME WELLBEING BINGO



WITH LOVE - EMMA @ IMAGISTIC.CO.UK

Image acknowledgement: Emma of www.imagistic.co.uk. We are sharing this to help you through Tier 4 and lockdown to but do visit her website if you can (or ask someone else to do so on your behalf and download her FREE 2021 year planner. **Things will get better!**

SELCE—warm homes



Helen of South East London Community Energy writes:

SELCE have adapted to provide energy advice remotely, now with a bigger team of advisers reaching African and African-Caribbean diaspora and Latin American communities. To refer yourself or someone else for a free phone advice session through our South London Healthy Homes network:

- Use this referral form: www.cact.org.uk/swtw
- Call: 0808 169 1779
- Email: energyadvice@selce.org.uk

What you can expect from SELCE until the end of March 2021:

- Helping you to top up your meter whilst self-isolating
- Providing top up vouchers
- Providing impartial advice on how to pay less for your electricity, gas and water

- Providing energy and water debt advice
- Supporting you to access grants or discounts you may be entitled to
- Explaining how to reduce your energy use at home by making your house more energy-efficient

• Connecting you to other sources of help
SELCE has teamed up with **Citizens Advice Lewisham**, who are helping people with long-term solutions to energy and other debt, budgeting and access to benefits.

We are delivering small energy and water saving measures with installation instructions for free to residents' homes. People can choose from a range of measures, such as radiator reflectors. We can talk people through how to install these on the phone.

For people who really need face to face advice we can deliver a limited number of socially distanced overview sessions and one-to-ones if safe enough.

Getting Crafty...

LPF will be back as soon as possible with the **Monday Project** in **St Mauritius House** but in the meantime why not keep the knitting going? We had a stall selling our knitted goods at the **Brockley Open Studios Christmas Fair** last month and raised over £200 for Forum funds! If you have knitted squares ready to be made into blankets get in touch and we can collect from you (taking all due C-19 precautions), to then sew together for sale at the next event.



No kit but would like to try? Again just ask the office for some wool, some needles and/or a copy of our LPF knitting brochure with simple patterns for squares, mittens and mice.



Also detailed in this brochure is how you can contribute to a piece of history by collaborating in the Forum's second **Friendship Quilt**—a celebration of Lewisham's rich diversity. Make a panel or even just donate a piece of fabric to represent your cultural heritage.



We will get through this!

Our Centre Pages

on home based activities and indoor exercise. You don't need the internet to be engaged and alert even if isolating!



We featured this in the first lockdown and they are now back with a new competition and greater flexibility and say:

We have made the King Lear Prizes even better than last time, thanks to your excellent ideas, tips and feedback!

- **Two new prize categories** - Write a short story from your life for our **Real Story** category, or record yourself playing or singing a piece of music for our **Musical Performance** category.
 - **Two categories from last time** - Write a work of poetry, or create a work of art using any media (painting, drawing, photography, textiles, knitting, ceramics, crafts etc.)
 - **You must enter at least one newly created work** - We will accept other works which you have done previously, so long as you enter at least one piece of new work done specifically for the competition.
 - **Compete against people at the same level as you** - This round of the competition has a single age category (over 65s only), but separate categories for beginners and for more experienced amateurs
 - **More prizes and opportunities to be recognised for your work** - Over £2,000 in prizes. Certificates and feedback if you are shortlisted, with hundreds of special commendations for high-quality work
 - **A small fee of £5 per entry to cover our costs** - As you know, The King Lear Prizes is a not-for-profit organisation, and we spent thousands of pounds of our own money putting on the competition last time. We'd like to make it a regular competition which covers its own costs.
- If your personal financial circumstances mean you are unable to contribute in this way, please email me directly, and I will find a way to make sure you can take part: andrew@kinglearprizes.org*

Deadline for entries is 19 March 2021 - you have 9 weeks to complete your new work in the New Year! **If you cannot go online but would like to enter, either ask a friend to use the option to register on your behalf or else phone the Forum office and leave a message. We will then post you a copy of the rules and an entry form.**

But still take a breath of fresh air!

As this newsletter is being prepared for the printers the tighter lockdown rules have just come back in. Shopping only for essentials—food and medicine, and **outside exercise limited to once a day**—although you are allowed to meet one other person from another household.

The weather will be getting colder but we are at least now past the shortest day and, if we look for them, there will soon be signs of spring appearing in front gardens—snowdrops, winter jasmine and maybe even crocuses in sheltered spots.

If you are lucky enough to live near one of the borough's 42 parks, or some community open space, perhaps arrange with a friend to meet (masked and distanced) for a chat and a stroll. Or if you are sensibly shielding at least go to stand for five minutes or so by an open door or window for a breath of fresh air and a look at the sky. Remember the TV images of the flat dwellers in the Italian cities in tight lockdown last March, singing on their balconies!

Exercise is also possible indoors

1. If you are able to go on-line, Christina Israel of the [60 Up Club](http://60UpClub.com) has several weekly Zoom exercise classes on offer. Email for more information: info@60up.or.uk or phone her on 020 3667 3704.
2. Do also get in touch with the Forum office if you would like a copy of the leaflet written by Elena who used to lead the Thursday Seated Yoga classes in St Mauritius House illustrating some basic moves—a reminder of the happier times we *will* achieve again.
3. It might seem childish (but no-one's going to be watching you!) so what about checking out the CBeebies channel to see if there's anything in the song and dance line you can join in with?

But—always—take care, if anything feels painful just stop. There is no need to prove anything.

Stay in touch and look out for each other

While we are locked down again, possibly alone, it is very important to have someone checking on your well-being. If you haven't got a friend or relative to exchange daily calls with do contact one of the befriending services listed on page 8.

Membership Matters



Forum Members are receiving papers for the postponed AGM now scheduled for Wednesday 24 February. This is being conducted partially by post this year and, as part of the pack (and funded by the London Community Response Fund grant from City Bridge Trust to “do things differently”), we are sending you a stamped envelope to return your voting slip. So, if you haven't managed to pay so far, it will be easy enough to also send us your payment. (You will need to be a paid up Member to vote.)

Please only send in a cheque if you get the note saying you have not paid for 2020-2021—we are not yet processing payments for 2021-2022.

For the future, however, it would be a great help to LPF if as many members as possible pay by standing order, so if you have been sent a form (with notes about the process on the back) please, if you can, set one up.

If you are asked for payment when you have in fact paid earlier in the year phone the office (020 8690 7869) with this or any queries and we will sort it out.

If you are not a member of LPF but would like to join (among other things ensuring you have future newsletters posted direct to you) please complete the form overleaf and send it in.

Introductory offer for new members joining is £5 through to March 2022 (£10pa thereafter).



Good news of Elena

who left Spain before Covid struck us all and is now living in Germany with her partner. She has sent us this picture to share with you all of their son, Matteo, with the Knit & Knatter LPF blanket we gave him. (Keep those squares coming in!)

With the magic of Zoom, Elena hopes to link up with us from her home in the Black Forest to do a yoga session at our Health Fayre

on 27 January (see page 2)

—it will be lovely to see her again. (For those

of you who can't

join us then,

do ask the

office for

one of her

exercise

leaflets.)



Initial here to give your consent to our holding your details on our membership data base as required by Data Protection	
Title	Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss/Other
First Name	
Last Name	
Address	
Postcode	
Tel.	Mobile
Email	
(write clearly distinguishing "r"/"v", "0"/"O", "2"/"U", "n"/"u", etc.) Initial here with the further opt-in to our using your e-mail	
Y of B	Yes / No
Reg. disabled?	Yes / No
Housebound?	
Yes / No	
Any skills or interests to offer to the Forum? e.g., Management, Book-keeping, Knitting, the NHS, housing issues	
Send to: LPF, Old Town Hall, Catford Road, London, SE6 4RU With your cheque for £5 for new membership to March 2022 plus any donation	

Online shopping: top tips to stay safe and shop smart



1. Learn how to spot fake reviews

A recent Which? investigation found thousands of Amazon sellers offering free products in exchange for five-star reviews. Don't take the overall rating at face value – read some reviews. If you see large volumes of five-star reviews, ask yourself how likely it is that so many people found a product or service faultless? Also check the negative reviews, to see if buyers had common issues.

2. Watch out for scams

More than £16 million was lost to online shopping fraud between March and June 2020 alone.* We advise extreme caution if you see any deals advertised on marketplaces and social media that look too good to be true. If you're buying from a seller on an online marketplace such as Amazon or eBay, it's worth having a quick look at their profile. Warning signs to watch out for include foreign seller locations, strange business names and a lack of contact details.

3. Don't risk buying a fake or dangerous product

In a recent Which? investigation, 66% of 250 products we bought from online marketplaces were dangerous or unsafe.** One easy way to ensure you're buying a safe product is to purchase directly from brands you're familiar with or from retailers you trust. If you're buying a brand you haven't heard of, do even more research than usual to make sure it's safe.

4. Make sure you're getting the best deal

Last year, we found 95% of products promoted in Black Friday sales were the same price or cheaper during the six months after the sales event – so there's no need to rush for your credit card when you spot a good price. Retailers use a range of psychological tactics to get you to hit 'buy now' when you're online, and time-limited offers are just one of them. The better informed you are, the easier you'll find it to separate the genuine deals from the duds.

5. Know your rights

In the last year alone, more than 1.8 million people have used Which? advice to help resolve shopping problems. A cut-price deal doesn't mean your consumer rights should be given the chop too. You have clear legal protections when you're shopping online, and we can help you understand what these are.

*Action Fraud, June 2020

**Investigation conducted in partnership with ICRT

Some updates from the NPC



Who write:

"A plea from NHS staff. Please, please, please make sure you and your family all dig out your NHS number and have a copy of it immediately to hand for when you or they are called for the COVID jab. From my colleagues on the front line this is far and away the biggest bottle neck when it comes to administering the vaccine to as many people as quickly as possible. You can find your NHS number on any NHS correspondence or through the app."

Watch out also for developments on the on-going TV licence saga. Dialogue is continuing between the NPC and the BBC as the FREE TV licence for over 75s is an essential element of the battle against loneliness and isolation. Similarly we must be vigilant to safeguard the "red button" service for news, weather, transport and sport updates, as an alternative to everything "on-line".

Hearing the voices of the digitally excluded



Healthwatch Lewisham wants to hear from people who do not use digital devices or have limited access to the internet.

- Are you a person that doesn't use digital devices?
- Do you live without internet at home?
- Do you have technology but don't know how to use it?
- Do you want to learn how to use digital technology?
- Are you finding the switch to digital technology frustrating?

Have you been affected by restrictions to access NHS and/or social care services during the pandemic?

If you answered "yes" to one or more of the questions, we would like to speak to you and explore your experiences of accessing health and care services. We particularly want to hear from people who fall under the below categories:

- People over the age of 50
- Those with a disability
- People who do not speak English as their first language
- Those on a low income

Why we are doing this?

We have started a local research project to find out how to ensure that everyone, including people who don't currently use digital devices, have equal access to health and social care services. To do this we want to speak to local residents about their experiences of accessing services during the pandemic.

What will happen as a result?

We will use our findings to work with local partners such as GP practices to improve access for residents who face barriers with the digital first model.

I'm passionate about it, can I help?

We are looking for volunteers to support our project. Would you like to **volunteer** with us and help out with the interviewing process? Then please contact us on the number below. We are also keen to recruit local residents who speak other languages.

More information:

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, health and care services had to make changes to how they support residents. There has been a shift towards a digital model of telephone and online appointment systems. We understand that it helps keep vulnerable people and staff safe during the pandemic, however these methods may become the new normal.

We would like to find out how you have found the new systems and whether you are happy with the new ways of receiving support from your GP, pharmacy, hospitals and dentist? Please contact us for an informal and anonymous chat where you can share your experience and feedback with our friendly staff team - Mat, Sophie and Marz.

If you would like to share your experience, volunteer, or want to find out more contact us by:

Telephone: 020 3886 0196

Mobile: 07309 736 622

Email: marzena@healthwatchlewisham.co.uk

For more than a decade Lewisham Pensioners Forum has been increasingly aware of this issue and campaigning on the discriminatory effect of more and more essential services going "on-line" each year.

We want to take a snapshot of what skills and experience people have (or don't have!) and what you want to learn about: a first step to those needs being met.

Please complete and return the survey enclosed with this newsletter.

Forms received back by 26 January will be included in a prize draw.



Useful numbers:

Distressed or in crisis? Call South London and Maudsley—**0800 731 2864** and press “1” or the Samaritans on **116 123**

Scams Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline (for advice on scams) **0808 223 11 33**

Action Fraud (to report a scam) **0300 123 2040**

Need help? Call the Silver Line anytime.

a free confidential helpline for information, friendship and advice

to older people, 24 hours a day. **0800 4 70 80 90**

Pensions Credit queries: call the Department for Work and Pensions on **0800 99 1234** or refer back to letter in August issue

Independent Age Helpline—free impartial advice over the telephone **0800 319 6789**

BBC TV Licensing number to phone if concerned about any communication from them or possible scams **0300 790 6151**

Community Connections —phone on **0330 058 3464** to connect to groups, get help staying active and/or access befriending and practical assistance

The LPF Office Feel free to ring us, and leave a message on the answerphone if necessary— **020 8690 7869**



Vaccine information from the CCG website



COVID-19 Vaccine: The NHS will let you know when it is your turn to have the vaccine. It is important not to contact the NHS or your GP practice for a vaccination before then.

So it is a matter of being patient —but in the meantime **BEWARE OF SCAMMERS!** People are already receiving fraudulent texts and phone calls. This message from **Brenda Dacres, LBL Cabinet Member for Safer Communities** who writes: *Watch out for scam emails, texts and calls about Covid-19 vaccines.*

*The NHS or your Doctor's Surgery will contact you in the order of their priority list. **You do not have to pay or give your account details.***

- Don't click on links
- Don't call the number (They are often extortionate premium numbers)
- Check the email address
- Check for typos in the message and suspicious wording

Disclaimer: The charity, Lewisham Pensioners Forum, is not to be held responsible for the accuracy of information received from other sources or the views and opinions, implicit or explicit, in pieces written under a personal by-line. We have also tried to provide up-to-date information but cannot guarantee this in the present situation.

Dear friends,

As we start 2021 in another lockdown we need to stay at home as much as possible to protect ourselves and our family from the spread of the virus. The winter months can be difficult but I know it is important to keep connected to maintain wellbeing.

We have got used to taking part in Zoom conversations and there are a number of classes online such as Qi Gong and Tai Chi. These offer a gentle way to reduce stress and anxiety with a focus on the breath to improve circulation and the movement of Tai Chi helps to increase balance. You can always get out and go for a walk in one of our many parks or start to get ready for the spring by planting some bulbs in pots or plan the planting of seeds.

The COVID-19 vaccination programme is now underway and this will soon provide protection for the over 60s. We are recruiting community champions to spread the message about the benefits of the jab to you which will ease the pressure on our local health services and the NHS.

Please keep safe and well – and look ahead to the spring when hopefully we should be on our way to getting through the pandemic.

Chris Best

LBL Cabinet Member for Health & Adult Social Care



In Civic Suite with the LPF Friendship Quilt

Progress of the Trade Bill This is now back in the Commons with a Lords amendment (Thornton No. 11) writing in protection for the NHS (well done, everyone!). But work still to do: please ask your friends and relatives in other constituencies to lobby their MPs (particularly in Tory marginals) to ensure this stays in the final Act.



The colour printing, double size and wider outreach of this and the five previous issues of the LPF newsletter has been made possible by funding from the **CITY BRIDGE TRUST**. We are very grateful for this generosity that has enabled us to provide a better service to our members and reach out to many others who are isolated by these difficult times.