Welcome to my 2013 - 14 Newsletter. Once again, I have had a busy and interesting time as Champion for Older People of West Lancashire.

Below are some of the events I have attended and supported including my attendance across the North West as a member of the North West Older People’s Champion Network.

NORTH WEST OLDER PEOPLE’S CHAMPION NETWORK

The Local Elected Member Older People’s Champion Network is growing in importance because of our ageing population.

The importance of the role of older people in our communities is recognised in a recent House of Lords Report chaired by Lord Filkin called “Ready for Ageing?”.

The Network contributed to the report emphasising the importance of the role of local councils working to ensure older people are fully part of our communities and are not isolated.

The House of Lords Report recognises the role of Older People’s Champions in raising this profile. In the report nine or so recommendations emphasised the need for older people to be involved in forward planning and assisting managers in local authorities to plan more carefully for the future.

The Network in 2013 has had a significant focus on Dementia Friendly Communities shaping local provision and activity to meet the needs of people with dementia.

The Network has become a member of the Age Action Alliance. This organisation is made up of some 500 public, private and voluntary sector organisations which include the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Cabinet Office and Age UK. It is designed to support the most vulnerable in our communities and spread best practice.

The Network now has a significant archive of good practice in the North West of England including combating doorstep crime and rogue traders who target older people. They also conduct early intervention work to help older people with well-being assessments that improve their general health and support them so they can stay in their own homes.

The Network programme will be equally challenging offering lobbying opportunities on current topics and further development of good practice in work with older people.

A copy of this newsletter will be sent to Simon Wilkinson D.W.P. for wider circulation to Age Action Alliance.
Queens Court

I was delighted to be invited by the Manager of Queens Court to meet residents and one very special lady Mary who is 98 years of age. In addition to this, I viewed a new suite of computers for residents to use which has recently been installed. A donation from the Older People's fund was given towards a new computer.

Brandreth Lodge Nursing Home

I arranged a surprise visit by the Mayor & Mayoress of West Lancashire, Cllr. Iain Ashcroft and Mrs Beverley Ashcroft for a very special lady living at Brandreth Lodge Nursing Home, Parbold, who had reached her 104th birthday on 25 July 2013.

Many of her relatives and friends gathered to wish her a happy birthday and the manager, Pauline Wilkie and staff prepared a beautiful birthday cake and a lovely buffet to celebrate this special occasion.

Mrs Goodger was delighted with the visit from the Mayor & Mayoress and spent a very happy morning discussing her very varied and interesting life in India, where she lived for many years, before returning to this country and eventually settling in Parbold.

Future North West Annual Conference

A well supported audience from various organisations across the North West attended. The AGM of Future North West at Kings Hall Manchester 7th November 2013. The Guest Speaker was Esther Rantzen CBE Chair of Silver Line. Workshops took place throughout the day on various issues affecting older people e.g. Better Representation for Older People: Loneliness & Isolation: Transport: A very full and informative day.

Miss Rantzen spoke very well on Loneliness and Isolation and how better to include and encourage these older people to join in activities available to them. With an ageing population, and still growing, it is important and necessary that needs of older people are recognised and included in decisions which may affect them.

The Friendship Club Ormskirk

During December I was invited by Mrs Pat Carr to lunch with members at The Friendship Club in Ormskirk. The Luncheon Club is well supported and very busy with many dates for members’ diaries for outings and activities etc. We were entertained by a group of ladies called “Dolly Mops” who sang and performed a short play. A most enjoyable afternoon.

Hilldale Community Association

A donation was given to Hilldale Community Association to support their monthly coffee mornings at Hilldale Village Hall. This is a popular event and well supported by older residents.
**Brookside**

The official opening of Brookside in Ormskirk took place Tuesday 13th November 2013. Actor Vince Earl from the TV show “Brookside” welcomed the invited guests who had been involved with Brookside since the cutting of the first sod. The Deputy Mayor, Cllr Iain Ashcroft gave a short speech and formally opened the Retirement Home by the cutting of the ribbon.

Brookside is a complex of 111 units with extra care facilities available. A great asset to West Lancashire for those who need extra care and for older people. Guests were entertained by the children’s choir from St Anne’s R C Primary School and later by the Skylarks Choir. Both choirs gave a really entertaining and lively singing.

**U3A Visit by Esther Rantzen**

A very special event was organised by Dr. Alex McMinn of University of 3rd Age (U3A) for Esther Rantzen to visit West Lancashire and speak about her new initiative Silver Line. Miss Rantzen is particularly interested in loneliness among older people. The new organisation is being extended nationally to try and encourage this group of people to meet and get out and about, with the help of volunteers. Various ways were discussed of befriending an older person for eg. Visiting/texting/telephoning and how best to start this. An audience of approximately 400 older people came along to hear Miss Rantzen speak followed by questions from the floor. It was a very interesting occasion.

**Visit to Christ Church Luncheon Club**

The Vicar of Christ Church, Reverend Ross Mourtin invited me to join the luncheon club for older people at Christ Church Hall. This gave me a opportunity to meet and talk with members. I gave a short speech about my role as Champion for Older People West Lancashire and as Ward Councillor in the Borough. It was a pleasure and an enjoyable occasion.

**Pardoe Retirement Home**

Pardoe Retirement Home celebrated 25 years since its first opening. The Manager, Maggie Parle and Val Bradley Chairperson for Bretherton & Pardoe Court Committee, the Mayor Cllr Iain Ashcroft and Mrs Beverley Ashcroft and I joined in the celebration. We had the opportunity to chat to residents and enjoy a lovely buffet. Later were entertained by music & songs from the 60/70’s. A very enjoyable afternoon.

**Marlborough Court**

An invitation to come along and see the new dishwasher which had been installed at Marlborough Court from a donation from the Older People’s Fund. Neil Chairman spoke and said it was a useful and much needed asset to residents, who were delighted with the new addition to their kitchen.
Carers Association AGM Skelmersdale Cricket Club

I attended the Annual Review 2013 of the Carers' Association at Skelmersdale Cricket Club chaired by Francis Williams. Francis said that the West Lancashire Carers’ Centre is grateful for the continuing support from Lancashire County Council and the NHS West Lancs Commissioning Group who have to spend prudently. He welcomed new members of the team but was sad at the retirement of Phil Carder, Finance Officer who has been a fount of wisdom and sound advice. He thanked the volunteers for their help over the past eighteen years and also to Marian Radford and staff who do so much for the Borough. He expressed his thanks to the Trustees, who provide strategic direction in developing the charity.

Margaret Radford, Principal Officer gave a full and interesting annual report on caring, connecting and growing. She welcomed a full delegation of carers and associated members to the Annual Review. She thanked all who work, in a voluntary capacity, on a 24/7 routine and said that their work is invaluable to the community. She was amazed to see that there are some 13,000 carers in West Lancashire. Margaret is retiring in the near future when she moves to her new home South of England.

Terry Mears, Head of Central Commissioning Team for L.C.C. was the guest speaker. He spoke about the changes in the way care in the community is approached. With austerity measures in place at the moment carers have to be more innovative in the way money is spent but he pointed out that now is the time to look to make savings and improvements in quality of care. These were challenging times, Mr Mears impressed upon members that the service provided at present would remain a priority. A very interesting and informative Annual Review.

Older People's Day Celebration Ormskirk & Skelmersdale Libraries

October 1st is the nationally recognised Older People's day and on behalf of the Ageing Well Forum West Lancashire was given the task to organise a celebration of this special day. Two events were held on the 2nd and 3rd October. Wednesday 2nd was held at Skelmersdale Library when various activities and displays took place. The Deputy Mayoress Cllr Mrs Doreen Stephenson supported the event and took part in activities.

Lunch and refreshments were available and visitors were given small gift bags. We were delighted when the children from Cobbs Brown Primary School Ashurst Skelmersdale choir and Skelmersdale Community choir came along to sing for us. Excellent singing by both choirs was enjoyed by all.

The second event was held at Ormskirk Library on Thursday 3rd October and was well supported. Again, similar activities took place throughout the day. The choir from St. Anne’s R.C.Primary School sang and also the Skylarks choir. Both choirs entertained beautifully. The day was well supported including the Mayor & Mayoress Cllr Iain Ashcroft & Mrs. Beverley Ashcroft. Lunch and refreshments were available and small gift bags were given to visitors.

My thanks to all who helped, especially the staff from Skelmersdale & Ormskirk Libraries, Sandra Wensley and Noreen Martin.
Recently, I met with Margaret Sutcliffe, Manager of Hillcroft Residential Care Home in Aughton, Lesley Malone the Co-ordinator, the Mayor & Mayoress, C. Cllr Julie Gibson, Cllr Iain Ashcroft and Mrs Beverley at Ormskirk Library. We joined with staff and residents to take part in memory activities. Various books on times past were available to look at and objects and games popular with children years ago. Amusing poems by Pam Ayres were read out loud and enjoyed by all. Thanks must be given to Martin Charlton of Charlton Mini Coaches who sponsored the trip to Ormskirk for the Residents.

Ladies Day

The Deputy Mayor Cllr, Doreen Stephenson and I were invited by the Manager of Hillcroft Residential Care Home, Margaret Sutcliffe to celebrate ladies’ day at The Cricketers, Ormskirk on Friday 4th April 2014. The resident ladies wore lovely hats made by staff from the Care Home for the special day. Thanks must be given to the Manager, Mr Dave Speak Manager of The Cricketers for his generous offer to sponsor a Champagne Breakfast for Hillcroft residents and guests.

Mere Brook

A NEW daytime support service for people with dementia in West Lancashire has celebrated its official opening. The service, called Mere Brook, sits within Brookside in Ormskirk, which opened in 2012.

It supports people aged over 50 who have complex mental health and physical care needs associated with their dementia, together with providing help, information and advice for their families and carers.

Mere Brook is run by a partnership that includes Lancashire County Council, West Lancashire Borough Council, West Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group and the Your Housing Group.

The activities on offer include arts and crafts, singing, drama, and gentle exercise, together with practical daily living tasks such as making drinks and snacks. They also include communication and conversation activities aimed at helping people to maintain friendships and other social contacts.

In addition, people will have the opportunity to take part in reminiscence and life story activities. These encourage people to remember and share things that are important to them, for example their families, hobbies and the sort of work they used to do.

Dr Ros Bonsor said: “Dementia is an increasing issue and can be very distressing for those suffering and for their families. Mere Brook will provide an invaluable service for patients, families and friends who use it, offering excellent activities to get involved with.

“The partnership between our organisations shows how united we all are in helping dementia sufferers. We are all proud of Mere Brook and excited about the significant role it will play in providing help and support for people with dementia in West Lancashire.”