

Forum 50+ Newsletter – February 2023

Message from the Chairperson, Dave Wright

We hope that 2023 is being good to you so far? Where does the time go – one minute you are preparing for Easter then it is Christmas and suddenly you are at Valentine's Day the following year.

Thank you to everyone who has confirmed that they wish to continue receiving the magazine and to those who have kindly sent donations. We are sending this edition to everyone again so if you haven't already let us know, please see page 4 and take action now to avoid missing out on future editions.

Our aim is to avoid spending on magazines that aren't read or not wanted, so that we can free up funds to help people and save on the printing and delivery costs.

We continue with our befriending service, which is either by phone or face to face. We are always looking for volunteers who like to chat, which eases loneliness or isolation and the benefits can be both ways! If you think you could spare 30 minutes per week to talk to someone, please contact us. That 30 minutes can make a huge difference

It is an important year because for the first time in 70 years we have a royal coronation. I can still remember the Queen's in 1953, All the family and neighbours in our house watching the Coronation on a 9 inch screen in Black and White.

We wish all our members and readers well in 2023 and hope to meet as many of you as we can during the year. I thank the trustees, staff and volunteers who keep our charity running and you for being our members.

(Next edition will be published in May 2023.)

Environment & Transport Action Group Ken Buttress, Chair of ETAG

I will start with the two recently introduced bus services, nos. 100 and 101. These services are being provided by Chaserider and Select Bus on behalf of Telford and Wrekin Borough Council and are not part of the rest of the network being run by Arriva. They are both subject to the new Government initiative for the period January to March this year where the maximum single bus fare is £2, and those who hold a bus pass can use that on these services as well.

We are aware that the 101 service timetable has been a problem and at the time of writing that this is to be amended, and that change should be in operation by the time you read this. Both these services go to the Telford hospital and are aimed at helping people to get to and from work and appointments during the day.

Turning to the Arriva bus network, there are very many complaints about buses missing from the schedules and just not turning up. Arriva have been losing drivers to other jobs, but they are addressing this and have set up a bus driver training school in Telford and are making an all out effort to recruit and train new drivers, but that takes some time unfortunately. Some new drivers are currently coming to the end of their training and should be behind the steering wheel soon.

Arriva have told us that they still do continue to struggle at times to maintain the service frequencies on some routes due to the number of roadworks, temporary traffic lights and road closures with route diversions in the borough.

The Arriva network is also subject to the government initiative for January to March with a maximum single bus fare of £2, and you can of course continue to use a bus pass if you hold one, within the permitted times.

As for the trains, these seem to be a never ending daily disaster, with trains arriving so full that it is physically impossible to get on them, with passengers told that another train is due soon, and that next train then arriving even more over loaded than the previous one. The Transport for Wales services are run directly by the devolved Welsh Government and we have no electoral voice with them of course.

West Midlands Trains are run under a franchise agreement with the English Government, so we can but suggest you scribe to your local MP. We will be taking these issues up with the two train companies as well on your behalf.

If you have a problem relating to Environment or Transport issues in Telford that are seemingly intractable, do let us know and we will do our best to help.

Coping in a power cut

Prepare

If you're over pensionable age, vulnerable, disabled, have a long term condition and/or rely on medical equipment contact your energy supplier to ask about being added to the FREE Priority Services register, which provides extra help and additional support during a power cut.

Keep a lantern or torch somewhere that's easy to find. Check that the batteries are working, and always make sure you have a spare set, too. Avoid candles and paraffin lights which can be dangerous.

Digital and cordless phones may not work during a power cut. Keep your mobile phone charged.

If you have a mains-operated chair lift, check to see if there is a manual release handle. You can use this to return safely to ground level if the power cuts out.

When it happens

You can call 105 or 0800 6783 105 to report a power cut or for information and advice. Save these numbers into your mobile phone or keep them safe.

First, check to see if it's a power cut or a problem with your fuses. Speak to your neighbours, or if it's dark, check the street lights.

Find your fuse box and check that the red rip switch is set to 'On'. If it's in the 'Off' position, turn off anything plugged into sockets (or pull out the plugs) and turn the switch to 'On'. If the power doesn't come back on, you can call 105.

Taking care

Be careful moving round your home, use a torch.

Don't open your freezer. Most power cuts are short, and your freezer will keep the contents protected for up to 12 hours.

Electrical surges during power cuts can damage digital devices, so turn them off or unplug them from the mains to keep them safe.

Check on elderly neighbours to ensure they're safe and warm.

If you are experiencing any problems, call 105.

It's never too late to quit smoking

While making the decision can be daunting, stopping smoking remains one of the best things you can do for your health. The Healthy Lifestyles Service has a dedicated stop smoking team ready to support you whenever you decide the time is right for you.

Stopping smoking has many benefits, both for your physical and mental health. Dr Nick White, the Chief Medical Officer for NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, says "After 72 hours the bronchial tubes begin to relax, breathing becomes easier and energy levels increase. After 3 to 9 months, coughs, wheezing and breathing problems improve as lung function increases by 10%. And after 1 year, the risk of heart attack has halved compared to a smoker."

Quitting can also improve your mood and of course, a smoker could save an average of £38 a week by giving up smoking.

Evidence suggests that a person is three times more likely to quit smoking successfully if they access some form of support. So if you've been thinking about stopping, it's never too late.

Contact the Healthy Lifestyles Service by emailing: healthylifestyles@telford.gov.uk, or calling them on 01952 382582.

Cost of Living Support Payments 2023 – 24

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has announced more detail on the payment schedule for the next round of cost of living support unveiled in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, building on payments made to over eight million people in 2022.

The new £900 cash boost for over eight million eligible means-tested benefits claimants, including those on Universal Credit, Pension Credit and tax credits, starts in Spring and will go direct to bank accounts in three payments over the course of the financial year. There will also be a separate £150 for over six million disabled people and £300 for over eight million pensioners on top of their Winter Fuel Payments.

Exact payment schedules will be announced closer to the time, but are spread across a longer period to ensure a consistent support offering throughout the year. They will be broadly as follows:

£301 – First Cost of Living Payment – during Spring 2023
£150 – Disability Payment – during Summer 2023
£300 – Second Cost of Living Payment – during Autumn 2023
£300 – Pensioner Payment – during Winter 2023/4
£299 – Third Cost of Living Payment – during Spring 2024

More details at www.gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payment

Correction to notice in last edition Telford Crisis Support

We featured an article in the November edition about donations of household items to the Telford Crisis Support. We mistakenly included duvets and pillows on the list, however they are unable to accept these items.

Our apologies to anyone who made a wasted journey.

Crisis Support is also asking for you to contact them before taking household donations as they sometimes run out of space.
Tel 01952 586646.

From 4 May 2023, voters in England will need to show photo ID to vote at polling stations in some elections.

This will apply to:

- Local elections
- Police and crime commissioner elections
- UK parliamentary by-elections
- Recall petitions.
- From October 2023 it will also apply to UK general elections.

The requirement to have photo identification only affects people voting in person at a polling station. It doesn't affect postal voters who have their identification verified by their signatures and date of births.

Voters at the polling station will need to show just one of the accepted forms identification which shows your photo, such as a passport, driving licence, blue badge, bus pass, national identity card.

If you don't have accepted photo ID, you can apply for a free voter ID document, which is known as a Voter Authority Certificate.

You need to have photo ID for the local council elections on 4th May. If you don't have ID and need to apply for a certificate, you will need to apply by 25th April.

To apply by post, tel 01952 383206 to request a form. To apply online: www.electoralcommission.org.uk

Need some help or advice about this? Call us on 07932 828333.

Ageing Gracefully By Paul Kalinauckas

Ageing gracefully is about taking care of your time, health and wealth. We talked about the benefits to your health of walking regularly in our last article. But have you heard the saying that when you're young you have plenty of time to do things, good health but insufficient wealth to pay for everything? And when you're middle aged, you seem to have no time to do everything but you still have good health and some wealth. This changes again in old age when you may not have such good health but you have time and hopefully some wealth. Ageing gracefully is part of a series of life transitions but if you keep healthy, you've got the time and wealth to enjoy life to the full.

If you fear the process of ageing try thinking about it as a process that allows you to accumulate lots of experience, insight, memories and knowledge over time. If you look after yourself you will come to enjoy ageing, rather than be afraid of it. Someone once said "Life is like a good book – the more you get into it, the more it comes together and makes sense". Ageing is a wonderful thing if you embrace life and take advantage of all the opportunities available to you. We all know the saying "Life is what you make it" so don't apologise for being elderly or give up on yourself in old age. Be at ease with yourself, mentally, emotionally, psychologically and physically.

We see youngsters and reminisce but we were also young once, just as they will one day be our age. What they bring to the table with their youth and zest, we bring our wisdom and experience. We have raised families, run households, paid the bills, dealt with illnesses, sadness, and everything else life has assigned us. We have lost those that were nearest and dearest to us but we are survivors. Even if our bodies aren't what they once were, they carry our souls, our courage, and our strength. Embrace this chapter of life with humility, grace, and pride over everything we have been through, and we should never feel bad about getting older. It's a privilege that is denied to so many.

Exercise Classes

Yoga for all abilities

Tues 9.45am - 10.45am

Leegomery Community Centre, Leegate, TF1 6NA

Chair Yoga

Weds 10.00am - 11.00am

Dawley Town Hall, High St, Dawley, TF4 3JR

Menoga - Yoga for Men

Thurs 9.15am - 10.15am

Hadley Community Centre, High St, Hadley, TF1 5NL

For all the above, call Sahara on 07475 500227.

Seated Exercise

Tues 1pm - 2pm

The Wakes, Theatre Sq, Oakengates, TF2 6EP

Call Sarah on 07821 739943

Exercise for All!

Weds 10am - 11am

St Leonard's Church, Alma Ave, Malinslee, TF4 2DS

Call Rebecca on 07773 852493

Tai Chi, plus tea & chat

Fridays 10am - 11am

Dawley Bank Baptist Church, Park Rd, Dawley Bank, TF4 2BB

Call 07570 808306

Breath Work & Meditation

with Sahara

Through meditation and breathing awareness we find a deep state of release from our muscular, mental and emotional tension, allowing the whole system to relax.

Wednesdays 11.15am - 12.15pm

Bring your own yoga mat. (Pillow and blanket recommended)

Can be done seated.

Open to all ages 18+

£3. Discount applies if attending

Chair Yoga session at 10am.

Contact Sahara 07475 500227

email: sarah@bridgnorthyoga.co.uk

There's still time to use or swap stamps without a barcode

Postage stamps sold since 31st January 2023 now have the new barcode attached. Royal Mail has introduced a 6-month grace period where it will deliver items using the old stamps as normal and will not apply a surcharge fee for insufficient postage.

This period ends on 31 July 2023 and will allow its customers more time to use any of their remaining 'old' non-barcode stamps. After the grace period items sent with the old stamps will incur a surcharge.

If you have too many old stamps to use up, you can swap them for the new version.

Christmas stamps and special picture stamps are exempt and will remain valid for postage after the 31 January 2023.

How do I swap my stamps?

You are unable to directly swap stamps at the Post Office. You must complete and return the 'Stamp Swap Out' form along with any unused stamps to the Royal Mail freepost address provided on the form.

There are two different forms depending on the value of your stamps. One for less than £200 worth of stamps and one for more than £200 so make sure you use the correct form.

You can get the 'Stamp Swap Out' forms via the following methods:

- Download and print off a form from the Royal Mail website.
www.royalmail.com/sending/barcoded-stamps
- Or complete their website form to request a form to be posted to you.
- You can also request a form by calling Royal Mail's customer services team on 03457 740740.
- You can pick one up from your local Royal Mail delivery office or Post Office.

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Platinum Home Support

Do you need support? Would you benefit from a personal home support worker? Let us take the stress away by doing household tasks that can take up your energy and leave you to rest while we do what we enjoy. We provide regular home services to those who need it.

We can include in our time:

- Household chores such as light dusting, vacuuming, bed making and laundry.
- Picking up shopping or prescriptions.
- We're available for pop-ins to make sure family members are OK, offer medication reminders and also prepare meals and drinks.
- We're also available to help loved ones with food shopping and chaperoning to social events, clubs and appointments.
- Companionship to help improve mood, isolation and loneliness.

Call Nicola Hayward, 07814 567248, email nicola@platinumhomesupport.co.uk

Speaking up about our mental health

It's not easy to know, or admit, that we may need help with our mental health. We may fear being labelled as 'mentally ill'. This may be particularly hard for people in later life as it's only in recent years that awareness of mental health issues has grown and we've started to tackle the stigma attached to them. Perhaps technology has played a part in raising awareness and enabling people to share their experiences.

However it still isn't easy to talk about mental health, or speak out when we are struggling. Perhaps we fear that we will be judged or be a 'burden'.

We may think our experience is just a part of life, a sign of personal weakness or that we should be able to control it without help. It's embarrassing to talk about it and stereotypes don't help, such as the perception that feeling low in later life is inevitable.

There are many aspects of modern life that contribute to finding stress hard to cope with. Trying to get a GP appointment, reading the news, managing our finances which can increase our anxiety. Sometimes, social media and the celebrity culture lead us to feel that our lives aren't working as well as other people's.

We may struggle a great deal through major changes, such as bereavement, illness, relationship breakdowns, family and friends moving away, losing employment or taking on a caring role. Not having people to talk to on a daily basis can increase our isolation, making it harder to cope with anxious thoughts and feelings.

Speak up

We deserve to enjoy good mental health at all ages and certainly no less so in later life. Help is available. Seeking support and connecting with others who have mental illness can help us gain self-esteem and overcome destructive self-judgment.

Speak to your GP.

Contact IAPT service, tel 01952 457415,
wellbeing.telford@mpft.nhs.uk

Contact Telford MIND, tel 07434 869248
talk2@telford-mind.co.uk

Find out more about mental health by visiting these websites:

www.mind.org.uk
twiapt.mpft.nhs.uk
mentalhealth-uk.org
www.mentalhealth.org.uk
www.nhs.uk/mental-health

Contact us at Forum 50+ to find out how you can meet up with others who also cope with anxiety and depression or how you might benefit from our befriending service.

Distracted by social media?

I often have conversations with clients, who are either getting complaints from their other halves about their attention to the above subject or simply, clients themselves wanting to cut down on the amount of time spent on social media.

Interestingly I was on a journey some weeks ago with my partner and found myself thinking 'shall I just check my phone as it's been a while?' I did, and immediately started getting distracted by other notifications. My first task was to check a question that came up in the conversation, however, I then went 'down a rabbit hole' and checked other things.

The point I'm making is that it's very easy to do this and find that hours are spent getting on other people's agendas, rather than yours! I say this, as that's exactly what social media is! It's someone else's life, thoughts, or opinions. I have nothing against social media and of course, use it myself, however,

when it starts interfering with a car journey with my partner then I feel I need to question my need to keep checking it.

I know I have written blogs before about allowing ourselves the time to 'just let our minds wander' rather than reaching for our phone at any point in the day we sit down or simply, have to wait for something. I do hear and observe more and more people having conversations with others whilst still looking at their phone. I'm not getting into the 'rude' debate however, I do feel it might be an idea to ask yourself what impression are you giving the other recipient? Do they really feel listened to? Do they really feel valued? I don't think it's too much to ask to at least get someone's undivided attention when engaging in a conversation.

If this is something you are concerned about or is ringing true for you, then maybe you might like to give some thought to cutting down on your time on the above? It may be an idea to reduce apps on your phone and just stick to a couple instead.

I hope the above has maybe given you a bit of food for thought and if you need a bit of extra help then please get in touch.

www.dismart-coach.co.uk dianne.srsmart@gmail.com
Tel: 07896 955 911

Digital Switchover - be prepared!

The UK's telephone network is going digital – the old copper network will be switched off at the end of 2025.

These changes will affect everyone who has a landline they'd like to keep using; soon these will work via a broadband connection instead. The phone network that has existed since the Victorian era is coming to the end of its life. Broadband connections rely increasingly on fibre optic networks, which offer faster speeds, are more reliable, resilient and easier to maintain.

When will my landline be switched off?

Your landline provider will get in touch with you when it's coming to the time for you to migrate. Traditional phone services will continue to work for a couple of years; by December 2025 they will be withdrawn entirely.

What will happen when I am moved to digital voice services?

In most cases, the changeover will be simple. Some phones might require an adaptor, otherwise you'll just plug yours into your router or a new socket. Older phones might need to be replaced. Some people might need a new or upgraded router, supplied by their provider. You'll be able to keep the same phone number and you'll pay for calls in the same way

What if I don't have or want a broadband connection?

Those who currently only have a landline won't be forced to pay for internet services that they don't want or need. The digital phone service will work using a special dedicated broadband connection and shouldn't cost any more than it does now.

What should I do about my telecare device?

If you are concerned about the impact of the move to on your telecare device, it's worth contacting the provider to check whether the device will still work. You might also want to let your telecoms provider know you have a device dependent on the landline – they may defer migrating you to digital services to allow you the time to confirm that the device will continue to work.

Will the new system work in a power cut?

No it won't, but Ofcom has made it a requirement for telecoms providers to identify people who are reliant on their landline and provide them with a free back-up option in case there's a power outage.

It's never too late to get digital!

Support with computers, tablets & smartphones

Need help getting started? Afraid of technology? Having problems?

Drop in at our free weekly sessions -

Hartshorne Court, Burton St, Dawley, TF4 2BY

Mondays, 10.30am - 12.30pm

The Anstice, 1 Anstice Square, Madeley, TF7 5BD

Tuesdays, 2pm - 3pm

Butter Cross Court, Stafford St, Newport, TF10 7UD

Wednesdays, 11am - 1pm

Help at Home is also available (charges will apply for more than 4 hours of home support)

Contact us by calling 07932 828333/07552 975676

Email: enquiries@forum50plus.org.uk

New Digital Skills courses for over 65s running in 2023 in various areas

Free, fun, friendly and supported by digital champion volunteers.

Tea and coffee provided. 6 x two hour sessions

Bring your own smart phone or tablet device, if you have one.

Topics include emailing, online shopping and internet safety.

To find out about dates and location or register your interest, please call 01952 380000. Or visit www.telford.gov.uk/getconnected

Alternatively you can contact Forum 50+ and we'll let you know when new courses are available. Tel 07932 828333.

Why I'm walking in the park every morning (despite these grey days!)

Dr Jane Graham

These mornings are a bit drab, aren't they? They hardly inspire you to leave home and go out walking for the sake of it, and I certainly admit to feeling uninspired when I think about going out on most mornings at the moment.

Nevertheless I am managing to get out and walk in the park every day, and I'll tell you why.

There is absolutely no better way of shaking off that 'grey day' feeling than getting moving and as a mental health professional I can't recommend it enough. Walking outdoors really helps shift your emotional and physical state. I won't bore you by talking about brain chemistry but there are so many good things about walking, for both mind and body, especially walking in a park or in the countryside, and it's important to remind ourselves about the benefits it can bring.

- Mental and Emotional benefits:
- Increases confidence in your ability to walk and increase your distances
- Improves your self-worth and self-belief
- Helps build resilience to stress
- Helps shift your focus from ruminations or worries and brings you into the present
- Changes your breathing patterns
- Reduces anxiety
- Improves low mood
- Increases your opportunities to interact with others
- Puts you in touch with nature (hearing bird song, seeing the wildlife and green space)
- Develops mindfulness skills

Physical benefits:

- Helps improve your focus and attention
- Gives your heart a workout
- Increases your energy levels
- Helps your metabolism and weight management
- Strengthens your bones and muscles
- Tiring out muscles improves your sleep
- Helps relieve pain (by releasing natural endorphins)

It's not about doing a lot, it's about experiencing the changing light, grounding yourself in the fresh air and having a change of scene. Little and often with anything works best, I find, and it's easier to keep up a routine doing little and often too.

If there are reasons why you can't get out and walk, find something else that you can comfortably do that will help you change your physical and emotional state.

When we do this, we get to see and experience life a little differently – grey days or not!

Dr Jane Graham is a Psychotherapist based in Telford.

Contact via: www.adhd-shropshire.co.uk

Carers Wellbeing Guide

The role carers play in looking after loved ones can severely impact their own wellbeing and a new booklet offers a guide to the latest information, advice, guidance and contacts to support carers.

The new guide has been produced for carers but contains lots of information that is useful to people who aren't carers too.

Visit www.telford.gov.uk/carerswellbeing

To order a printed copy call 01952 457181 (Monday to Friday, 10am – 5pm)

Ask the Chancellor to end the long wait for social care

Millions of older people in England are stuck waiting for care. They're struggling to eat, get dressed, or even use the toilet because they can't do these things unaided.

Many older people have already been waiting far too long for care – they can't wait any longer.

Sign the petition here: <https://bit.ly/3HVM2eK>

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Why not give it a go?..

Warm Spaces

There are several 'warm spaces' now open across the borough where you can go to get warm, have refreshments, chat and do some activities. If you'd like help finding one close to you, call us on 07932 828333.

Tea, Toast & Talk

Carpenter Centre, Overdale

Fridays 10am - 12pm.

Food, hot drinks, activities, £1.

Tel 01952 385601.

Lawley Walkers, tel 07702 312583.

Chatty Café, tel 01952 502420.

Lawley Village Green Group - environment/gardening.
email greengrouplawley@gmail.com

Forum 50+ social groups

Tea/coffee, chat, meet new friends. New group starting in Horsehay in March. Call 07552 975676 for details.

Senior Social @The Wakes

Different activities weekly on a Thursday afternoon at 1.30pm, at the Wakes, Oakengates, TF2 6EP. Visit www.thewakes.org.uk/whats-on/ or call in at the town clerk's office at the Wakes.

Making a Splash!

Swimming is perfect for working our entire bodies and cardiovascular system, whatever our age or level of fitness. It can reduce our risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and stroke, as well as helping us to lose weight, be more flexible, stronger and more mobile.

The water helps to reduce the strain on our bones, bodies and joints. And swimming can improve coordination, balance and posture. It can also improve our mood and reduce stress levels, and help us sleep better.

Ask your local pool for beginners' lessons for all ages to help get you started and feel more confident.

You could also try a pool fitness class such as 'aquafit' or water aerobics, which provide similar benefits in a more social, fun, group environment.

It's good to warm up and stretch your muscles first, don't overdo it if you're just starting out, and remember to have plenty of fluids on hand afterwards.

Swimming is affordable too. Visit Telford & Wrekin Council's Leisure Services website for details of local pools, session costs and membership packages, free swimming for some residents and just £1 for others.

If you have a health condition ask your GP before you start swimming.

#TogetherWeMove

One of the Telford & Wrekin Health Champions has been appointed as the first Champion of a new Social Movement - #TogetherWeMove.

Wellington resident, Paul Kalinauckas became a volunteer Health Champion five years ago, to encourage others to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Since then he has established Shropshire Canicross who

run on trails with their dogs, Bowring Runners, a Running Group based at his local Park and Bowring Walkers.

Across Shropshire we have over 25% of the population who are inactive that the #TogetherWeMove campaign wants to encourage to adopt an active lifestyle in order to improve their health and wellbeing. You can read more about it here at energizestw.org.uk.

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