

Forum 50+ Newsletter – Nov/Dec 2023

Message from the Chairperson, Dave Wright

Welcome to this our final edition of the FORUM for 2023. We hope you are well, getting out and about, meeting up with new friends at our social and exercise groups and in general making the most of your life?

We would like to thank those of you who attended our Annual General Meeting. Numbers were slightly down this year but those who attended enjoyed the two activities and a catch up over coffee and cakes, as well as giving our ETAG Chairman several actions to follow up on. As stated in my Annual Report, over the year we have received a high number of referrals for people who have needed support either by phone or at home, or help getting out. If you would like some support or company please get in touch.

Well done to our volunteers and providers who have met the challenge and our two members of staff Chris and Wendy. The AGM was sadly Wendy's final meeting before she retired. We will miss her cheerful face but wish her all the best in her retirement.

I would like to thank everyone who voted for me to continue my role as Chairman of Forum 50+ for the next year. Forum 50+ is always looking for volunteers to either join our Board of Trustees, get involved with our social groups, befriending, computers or have an interest in joining our Environment and Transport Action Group. Please let us know and we will welcome you with open arms.

Look after yourselves this winter and best wishes for the festive season from all the Trustees and Staff here at Forum 50+.

Hope to meet you in 2024.

(Next edition will be published in February 2024)

Environment & Transport Action Group Ken Buttress, Chair of ETAG

Trains

I had written my report to include responses I'd received from our local MPs to the letters I had sent them objecting to the planned closures of railway station ticket offices. However, news this week has meant a last minute rewrite as, following a huge public response the Department of Transport has asked rail companies to withdraw the proposals, and the offices will remain open, at least for the time being.

Buses

I have written to the council about a number of issues raised at the Forum AGM about the recent changes to the bus routes and timetables. It seems that late funding announcements by the government and the need for a tender process left little time for consultation.

The funding announcement would have meant that less than one third of the cost of the previous services would have been covered, which was not sustainable. Only about one half of the cost of the amended services are covered even so.

In answer to queries at the AGM:

The new route 99 covers the full loop at Shawbirch, at Arleston the 101 now covers the full loop as the 99 only runs along Dawley Road. Ketley Bank is covered except for the Avenue stops as the timetable did not allow this, and work is in hand to see if the 99 can be adjusted to cover Dothill.

Tough decisions had to be made to serve as many areas as possible, keep a regular timetable and meet legislation requirements. The aim of services 99 – 103 is to link residents to key borough towns and the hospital. School bus journeys have been diverted on to the public bus services as a key part of making the routes more sustainable.

The council will continue in discussions with operators to make adjustments as necessary, such as the recent change to the 100 route after consulting businesses to help improve employment prospects for residents at the Hortonwood, Stafford Park and Halesfield industrial estates.

We are aware that the timetables for these new services are difficult to track down but can be found on www.telford.gov.uk/busservices if you are online. The old adage 'use them or lose them' applies. Go for a ride and let the council know what you think of them.

A question was raised at the AGM about whether the Dial-a-Ride service had ended. The council advises that this is not so and any residents not able to walk to their nearest bus stop can use Dial-a-Ride for a door to door solution for healthcare or shopping. Residents can apply for Dial-a-Ride on www.telford.gov.uk/info/20174/publictransport/3547/dial-a-ride Send for a grandchild to make the application on your behalf!!

All the borough bus services are subject to the government initiative originally for the period January to March this year, which has now been extended again to the end of next year, where the maximum single bus fare is currently £2 but about to increase to £2.50. Those who hold a bus pass can use that on these services as well within the permitted times.

And finally yet a further appeal. ETAG is really short of members particularly at holiday times. We meet once every 2 months for a couple of hours at Hadley Community Centre with an occasional bit of research to do between meetings. So if you feel you might be interested in joining us please contact Forum 50+.

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

Winter Tyre Care

Check your tyres for general wear and tear, cracks, splits or bulges, and most importantly, tread depth.

Although the minimum tread level is 1.6mm, during winter it's advisable to have 3mm of tread on your tyres to help with traction and grip. Take a 20 pence piece and insert it into the grooves between the tread. If the coin's raised outer edge is visible, the tyre needs replacing. Then ensure that the tread has not dropped as low as the little ridges that sit in the channels between the tread, which are there to warn drivers when the minimum legally permitted tread depth (1.6mm) has been reached.

Also check regularly that you have the correct pressure in your tyres - check your owner's handbook for the correct inflation levels. Ideally, check them when they are cool to the touch.

Keeping your tyres in good condition will help reduce the risk of an accident. So if you're still unsure or don't feel confident, call in at your local garage or tyre fitters and ask them for advice on how to look after them correctly.

Technology

Need help getting started? Want to learn more? Having problems?

Drop in at our free weekly sessions:

Hartshorne Court, Burton St, Dawley, TF4 2BY

Mondays, 10.30am - 12.30pm

Madeley Library at the Anstice, 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

Email: enquiries@forum50plus.org.uk

Update on the Digital Phone Switchover

In our February 2023 edition we reported on the rollout of the digital switchover which is due in spring 2024 for older people in the West Midlands. You'll receive a letter from your telecom provider explaining what you will need to do to ensure you remain connected. Phone services will work via a broadband connection instead but if you don't currently have broadband it will work using a special connection.

If you have a telecare alarm device you may be switched over at a later date. When you receive a letter it's a good idea to contact the alarm company for advice. There are still issues to solve with some areas having poor or no broadband signal. Ofcom states that providers should take steps to identify at-risk customers and ensure all eligible customers are protected throughout the upgrade process. Ofcom has also made it a requirement 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.

Does anyone remember these very snowy winters?

1946/47

With the country recovering from the Second World War, between January 1947 and March 1947, snow fell somewhere in the UK for 55 straight days. The snow was the main issue, but temperatures hit -21C across the UK. Once the snow started to melt, the water poured into rivers. Many of these burst their banks and flooded nearby areas.

1962/63

The coldest winter in 200 years, the 'Big Freeze of 1963' is considered the worst in modern British history. Edgmond, near Newport, Shropshire, dropped to -26.1C and Shropshire was said to be 'colder than the south pole'. The Thames froze over in Oxford, with a car being driven over the river there on 22 January. In some parts, a snowdrift of over 20ft deep was recorded.

1978-79

Mid February saw drifts of 6-7 feet on the east coast of England.

1982

A mixture of snow blizzards and low temperatures made this winter spell record-breaking. This time also saw the coldest registered temperature in UK modern history recorded in Braemar. A rather frightening -27.2C was recorded. Snow fell on and off from December through to March, and some areas saw snow of up to 23ft.

2017/18

The "Beast from the East" at the end of February 2018 brought numerous snow showers, and thundersnow was reported widely in north-east England. Another unusually potent easterly for the time of year hit on 17/18 March and brought widespread snow showers to eastern areas and the end of March and beginning of April also saw snow for some, mainly on high ground.

Here's hoping 2023/24 isn't added to the list!

Finances

Current and common scams to be aware of:

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is receiving reports of a scam where a phone call, text or email claims to be from them and states that you are owed compensation then asks for bank details.

You get an email claiming that your TV Licence has expired and there was a problem renewing it, so they give a deadline for updating your bank details.

You get a text saying your parcel couldn't be delivered or that there's a charge to collect your mail from the sorting office.

Phone calls where the caller poses as a bank employee or the police and ask you to withdraw or transfer money. Or someone calls saying they are from Microsoft and there's a problem with your computer.

These organisations will never call you in this way, so don't continue with the call and never share any financial or personal details.

Beware the inevitable digital switchover scams:

It's fairly certain that fraudsters will look upon the switchover as an opportunity to find new ways to scam people out of their money, by text, phone, email or even in person. Some fraudsters might try to sell you equipment or sign up to a contract, which is always suspicious. Your phone company will contact about the switchover by letter or perhaps by email and they will never ask for any payment or bank account or card details. If in any doubt end the call or ignore the message and phone your phone company for advice if needed.

Telford Energy Advice - your local energy advice service.

TEA offers free and impartial support on all domestic energy efficiency matters including the best deal on gas and electricity, accessing grants for home energy efficiency/heating improvements and advice about keeping warm at home.

If you or someone you know has concerns about energy, contact the friendly local team on 0800 677 1952 or email advice@mea.org.uk

Have you built up credit paying your gas and electric by direct debit? Getting it back may not be as easy as you'd think.

From moneysavingsexpert.com

The Price Cap rates from 1st October fell to £1,834 a year for a typical household (based on Ofgem's new, lower typical use), meaning most households will see bills fall by 7% on average. Monthly direct debit is around £125 cheaper a year on average than paying on receipt of a bill and suppliers base direct debits on an estimate of your usage over a year, divided by 12. So you may be paying too much but may be happy to do so to ensure you don't fall behind but you could still have a fight on your hands if you would like to get your cash back or your payments lowered.

Step 1: Do regular meter reading and send it to your supplier. Don't let the company rely on its estimates: that's just a great excuse for it to set high direct debits. (The info on how to read your meter will be on your bill, or look online. You can usually give readings online, via an app, or by calling an automated answer system – or sometimes you can even speak to an actual person!)

Step 2: If you're heavily in credit ask for your money back. It's expected that between summer and winter, you will have racked up some credit. Yet if you're heavily and disproportionately in credit, then before asking your supplier to lower the direct debit, you might want to get a chunk of the amount you've overpaid back.

According to regulator Ofgem, suppliers must refund accumulated credit, though it doesn't say how much it thinks is fair. That said, you may still have to chase them.

Quote condition 27 of the Gas Supply Licence, which states credits must be refunded and direct debits fair. If they won't reset it, you're entitled to a full explanation, and you can complain to the Energy Ombudsman.

Step 3: Call to ask for a lower direct debit to reflect your ACTUAL annual usage and meter readings. Some companies allow you to raise your direct debit on their website but do not let you lower it. Do remember that electricity and gas companies rightly should err very slightly on the side of overpayment rather than underpayment, as otherwise you could get a shock at the end of the year with a big catch-up bill.

Step 4: If they won't budge on the phone, write a formal letter requesting the direct debit be lowered and threaten if there's no change, you'll ditch and switch.

If none of that works, then variable direct debit (paying according to what you actually use) becomes a good option, but you have to be prepared to shell out more in the winter, and see big swings in what you pay.

AGEING GRACEFULLY

By Paul Kalinauckas

Studies looking at twins have found that our ageing rates are largely determined by what we eat and drink, how much we move, our stress levels and social connections. These are things that you can change which will boost your health and happiness to age more gracefully. What we eat can influence our mood, energy levels, concentration and how we respond to life events. Regular eating patterns can really help with this, so take more time to plan your meals ahead.

As we get older, we can also develop a reduced sensation of thirst which means that we are vulnerable to dehydration. Even mild dehydration affects mental performance and increases feelings of tiredness. If you feel thirsty you are most likely already dehydrated so try drinking more water. Small amounts of exercise will also make a big difference to your physical and emotional wellbeing. Exercise increases blood flow, encourages muscle growth and releases endorphins. It may be as simple as going for a walk or joining a local exercise class.

Isolation is one of the leading causes of depression amongst older adults, so why not call a friend or family member or pass the time of day with someone when out shopping? You may be surprised to learn that your brain can learn and grow as you age, this process is called brain plasticity. Practising a new and challenging activity will build and maintain your brain health.

This could be learning a new language, a new instrument, photography, painting or doing puzzles. All of the above will help to keep you connected to people and the things you love to do, enhancing your quality of life and ageing gracefully.

Forum 50+ Exercise & Wellbeing Classes

Seated Exercise Classes

Tues 1pm - 2pm

The Wakes, Theatre Square, Oakengates, TF2 6EP

Tues 2.15pm - 3.45pm

Cuppa & chat afterwards

Ketley Community Centre, Holyhead Road, Ketley, Telford, TF1 5AN

Thurs 10.30am - 11.30am

Cuppa & chat afterwards

Admaston House, Wellington Road, Admaston, Telford, TF5 0BN

Call 07932 828333 enquiries@forum50plus.org.uk

Yoga

Yoga for all abilities

Tues 9.30am - 10.30am

Leegomery Community Centre, Leegate, TF1 6NA

New teacher, call Sam 07957 491250

Chair Yoga

Weds 9.30am - 10.30am

(May not run during school holidays.)

Dawley Town Hall, High St, TF4 3JR

Menoga - Yoga for Men

Thurs 9.15am - 10.15am

Nov 23rd only:

Arleston Community Centre, St Giles Close, TF1 2AB

From 30th Nov:
Dawley Town Hall, High St, TF4 3JR
(May not run during school holidays)

Breath Work & Meditation
Weds 10.45am - 11.45pm
(May not run during school holidays.)
Dawley Town Hall, High St, TF4 3JR

Call Sahara 07475 500227.
Sarah@bridgnorthyoga.co.uk

For all classes, please call first. Small fee payable. £3.50/£4

Over 50's Fitness Classes

Looking for new members!
Jubilee House, Madeley, TF7 5AH, every Tuesday & Friday morning 9.30-10.30am.
We are a very friendly, welcoming class. It's a great way to get fit, meet like minded people and to have fun. The class also organises meals out and summer trips if interested.

Contact 07714 610591 or 01952 586867

Seniors Gym Club

Gym and Fitness & Rhythm exercise for over 55s

Looking for a friendly group where you can meet new people and keep healthy at the same time? Why not join one of our low impact fitness sessions led by a qualified instructor.

The following group sessions are currently available to club members:

GYM SESSIONS

Mondays 2.00pm - 3.00pm

Thursdays 2.00pm - 3.00pm

Both at Abraham Darby Sports and Leisure Centre.

Fridays 11am -12pm Horsehay Village Golf Centre.

FITNESS & RHYTHM SESSIONS

(Exercise with background music)

Wednesdays 2.30pm – 3.30pm Wellington Civic and Leisure Centre.

£12.00 annual club membership.

There is also a £3.00 charge for each session attended with the first session being free.

For more information please contact Kevin 01952 825239

Olga 01952 595690 or Colin 07811 887901.

Urinary Tract Infections (UTI's)

If you have ever had a Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) or you suffer from them regularly you'll know how they can cause pain, discomfort and misery and have a debilitating effect on how you function day to day. They can also develop into a severe infection that can cause you to become very ill and you may then need to go to hospital.

Identifying a UTI: the symptoms

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) affect your urinary tract, including your bladder, urethra, or kidneys.

Signs and symptoms you may experience if you have a UTI:

- Needing to pee more frequently, suddenly, or more urgently than usual.
- Pain or a burning sensation when peeing.
- Needing to pee at night more often than usual.
- New pain in the lower tummy, kidney pain or pain in the lower back.
- New incontinence or wetting yourself that is worse than usual.
- Blood in the pee.
- Changes in behaviour, such as acting agitated or confused (delirium). This could be a symptom of a UTI but could also be due to other causes, which need to be ruled out.
- General signs of infection, like a fever, a high temperature or feeling hot and shivery, with shaking (rigors) or chills.
- A very low temperature below 36°C.

You may experience fewer of these symptoms if you have a urinary catheter.

Helping to prevent a UTI:

Drinking enough fluids. Regular drinks, like water or squash will boost hydration and help your body stay healthy. The NHS Eatwell Guide recommends that people should aim to drink 6 to 8 cups or glasses of fluid a day. Water, lower-fat milk and sugar-free drinks, including tea and coffee, all count.

If you are having difficulties getting to the toilet or worried about incontinence don't reduce the amount you drink. Discuss this with your doctor or a nurse who will be able to help you.

Not holding onto your pee, go to the toilet as soon as possible when you need to.

Keeping up with personal hygiene. Wash, or shower daily where possible especially if you suffer from incontinence and keep the genital area clean and dry.

What should you do if you think you have a UTI?

Ensure you are drinking enough fluids to avoid becoming dehydrated. Take paracetamol up to four times a day to reduce any pain.

Who to contact and treatment

Contact a healthcare professional if you think you might have a UTI, this could be your GP, a nurse, the community pharmacist, a walk-in centre or the NHS 111 service. There are different treatment options to discuss with your healthcare professional. Antibiotics are not always needed for urinary symptoms and should only be taken if prescribed by a healthcare professional. Always ensure antibiotics are taken as directed on the medicine label.

Quick Xmas Trivia Quiz Answers at the end.

1. In the song 'The 12 Days of Christmas' how many 'ladies dancing' are there?
2. There are 365 days in a year. What number day is Christmas Day?
3. What is a female turkey called?
4. Who had a huge hit in 1976 with 'When a Child is Born'?
5. If you're born on Christmas Day, what's your star sign?
6. How many days are there on a traditional advent calendar?
7. How many sides do traditional snowflakes have?
8. Stollen is the traditional fruit cake of which country?
9. How many 'las' are after the 'fa' in 'Deck the Halls'?
10. Who wrote 'A Christmas Carol'?

The process of taking care of yourself and being cosy Dr Jane Graham

In Scandinavia they call it *hygge* (pronounced hoo-ga), while in Germany they call it *Gemütlichkeit*. Neither words mean something specific, but describe the process of taking care of yourself and those you care about, while being cosy in winter months.

As we find ourselves in winter, now is a good time to think about what we can do to find our own 'hygge' here in England, and it may surprise you to know that it isn't about spending money. Here's how you can find your own 'hygge':

For you

- Get comfy in lounge pants or pyjamas.
- Wrap up in a throw or blanket.
- Take a warm bath, with bubbles or bath salts if you can.
- Read a book.
- Make a warming drink.
- Bake biscuits or cakes.
- Get crafting, with knitting, art, or find other ways to enjoy creating.
- Listen to music.
- Watch favourite films.
- Wrap up warm and get out for a walk and enjoy the crisp days and the winter light.
- Allow yourself to dream.

For yourself and others

- Share food by inviting those you're close to for tea
- and cake, or a meal
- Keep in touch with others, including neighbours
- Be mindful of people who are alone, and try to
- reach out. It's good for you as well as them!

Happy Hygge-ing!

Dr Jane Graham is a Psychotherapist based in Telford. Contact via: www.adhd-shropshire.co.uk

Is panic setting in about Christmas?

Are you worrying about covid hitting this Christmas?

Are you wondering if the supermarkets will still be stocking turkeys?

Are you concerned that you won't have enough to go around and that on Christmas Day you will suddenly realise you didn't get the stuffing?

Well, for your reassurance we all have these fears and we all think about them regularly! Particularly, during the next few weeks.....

For those of you who have read my blogs before it will come as no surprise to you that I am sayingGET ORGANISED!

I can hear you saying, "but how, I have so much to do". Yes, it's busy and yes, time is running out but with a bit of pre planning and organisation all can be achieved! Yes, really it can!

The first and most important thing is to make that all important list! I cannot stress the importance of lists in my life. They are basic but brilliant as, they not only remind us what to do and what to buy they also keep us focused and more importantly give us some level of control.

Control, you might ask.....what has that to do with anything? Well, my answer to that would be that control is what keeps us happy, calm and most importantly keeps our general well being in check.

So, what after the list is completed and the panic really sets in due to the amount of 'stuff' on it? Breaking up the tasks into bite size pieces is always a plan as this makes time consuming tasks manageable.

Instead of giving yourself the task of getting everyone's Christmas presents in one afternoon and feeling deflated when you don't. Break it down and say, you'll hope to complete a quarter on the list, that way if you do complete more; you'll feel so much better and may even want to continue shopping!

If you've asked people what they would like and they don't come up with an answer, don't feel bad about getting a voucher or giving cash. We all like to receive a gift and we all like to put some thought into what to give others. However, it's really not worth getting anxious about! I'm sure no relative or friend would want that!

So, take a deep breath and start that list. Two may be better as it might read: 'things to buy' & 'things to be done'?

The other burning question is 'do YOU have to do everything'? Delegate where you can, it may feel uncomfortable but 'two hands are better than one', as they say! It's not cheating; it's just using your common sense and time more effectively.....so go on, ask!

It's easy to get things out of proportion when we feel under pressure but, at the end of the day all most members want is time together, a hot meal and a small but heartfelt gift! Most of us will be delighted to just be together after last year!

So...calm thoughts and get 'listing'!

Could you spare some time to help someone feel a little less lonely?

You can offer your support either by telephone or in person, which can include home visiting and/or accompanied outings, eg a short walk, trip to the shops or cafe.

Other Forum 50+ volunteer roles:

Helping out at one of our regular social groups, helping set up a new group or organising social activities.

Giving people a lift.

Offering digital support.

Joining our Environment and Transport Action Group

Charity Trustee.

Flexible times, re-imbusement of travel costs, full guidance/support.

Give it a go! If it doesn't suit you, there's no obligation to continue.

To find out more, call Chris on 07932 828333

or email enquiries@forum50plus.org.uk

Why not give it a go?..

Forum 50+ social groups

Tea/coffee, chat, meet new friends.

Horsehay Village Hall, Bridge Rd, Horsehay TF4 2NF

(Occasional activities – including indoor curling last Monday of every month except December)

Mondays 10.30am - 12pm

Six Bells Inn, Church St, Madeley, TF7 5BN

Mondays 1.30pm - 3pm

Sambrook Centre, Grange Ave, Stirchley, TF3 1FL

1st & 3rd Tuesdays of the month. 10.30am - 12pm

The Woolpack, Acorn Way, Shawbirch, TF5 0LW

Tuesdays 1.30pm - 3pm

Outpost Cafe at the Wakes, Theatre Sq, Oakengates, TF2 6EP

Wednesdays 1.30pm - 3pm

Wrockwardine Wood & Trench Parish Council, Church Rd, TF2 7AH

Thursdays 10.30am - 12pm

Highfield House, Hadley Hollow, TF1 5NX

Fortnightly Thursdays 10.30am - 12pm

Call 07932 828333 for details.

Could you volunteer an hour a week to help others make connections in our community ?

Lawley Community Hub are seeking volunteers to run a community coffee morning for an hour once a week . You would:

- Welcome visitors and chat to people
- Show people where to make drinks
- Welcome outreach workers for drop-ins

Contact: lawleystewardship@bvt.org.uk

Senior Social at the Wakes

Programme Winter 2023 Thursdays at 1.30pm - 3pm

- 9 Nov Live Music with Kerry Young £6
- 16 Nov Tai Chi £6
- 23 Nov Film Screening (Starts 1.00pm) £4
- 30 Nov Winter Table Arrangement Workshop £8
- 7 Dec Christmas Quiz £4
- 14 Dec Christmas Lunch with live music (starts 1.00pm) £8

Lunch is included.

Tickets can be purchased from the Wakes, Oakengates, TF2 6EP on Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10am - 12 and 1pm - 4pm.

Or tickets can be booked online at www.thewakes.org.uk

Gentle Dance & Social

The ultimate feel good dance class!

Tuesdays

11.30am - 12.30pm

The Wakes, Oakengates, TF2 6EP

1.30pm - 2.30pm

At the Anstice, Madeley, TF7 5BB

Suitable for beginners, all ages & abilities. Improves overall fitness, mobility, coordination, balance, strength & flexibility as boosting your mood! No need to book, just turn up.

Need help finding a group, club or class?

Visit our directory at

forum50plus.org.uk/clubs-groups-and-classes/ where you'll find a huge list of activities. You can view the list either by category or by area.

If you're not online, give us a call and we can have a look for you.
07932 828333.

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Enriching and Making a Difference to Lives Every Day

As our population ages, the desire for prolonged, healthier lives intensifies. Right at Home is a leader in ensuring that seniors enjoy their later years in the comfort of their own homes. We understand the profound wish to age gracefully at home, cherishing independence, and community connections.

We challenge the outdated notion that retirement means inactivity and moving to assisted living facilities. Ageing, while a beautiful journey, has its challenges. Simple tasks can become obstacles, and while family is an invaluable anchor, we understand that they can't always be present.

Right at Home is your trusted partner, providing personalised support with compassion, quality, respect, and trust.

We value that small acts of kindness make a significant impact and our dedicated caregivers establish genuine connections, becoming more than just helpers—they are trusted companions.

Choosing Right at Home means embracing unparalleled support, devoted care, and genuine companionship, empowering individuals to live independently and stay connected with their communities.

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