Welcome to the first edition of Grey Matters for 2013. As well as news about our Forum this issue is packed with information on how to stay warm and healthy this winter

The Winter Home Check Service includes a full assessment of the home to identify how to keep it warm, and can provide help with small works such as reducing draughts, improving insulation, clearing gutters, lagging pipes, clearing chimneys, providing additional temporary heating. To find out if you qualify for this service contact Social Care Direct by telephone on 0345 60 80 191 or email: socialcaredirect@eastsussex.gov.uk

Wealden District Council may be able to help with costs for insulation or boiler repairs, contact: Downs Insulation – 01444 460119.

The council also provides grants for emergency repairs such as boiler breakdowns. To apply you must meet their eligible criteria and be over 60 and on an income related benefit. For more information call Wealden District Council’s Home Repairs Assistance Grant line on 01323 443322.

In 2012, for the second year we took part in Spring Online by holding an event for Silver Surfers Day. We asked Heathfield Community College to help with our event this year, and host an afternoon aimed at helping people to use Skype, Facebook and Twitter.

20 participants turned up on the day – the rest probably having been put off by the foul weather! All were welcomed by the College staff, and students were allocated to them according to which subject they were particularly interested in learning about. There was a real buzz for the whole duration, and the participants said that they would have liked to be able to spend a lot more time with the students. Information Packs were prepared by WSCP and given to all participants to take home. These contained guides to Skype, Facebook and Twitter which had formed the basis of what the students taught in the sessions. Thus there would be no “Now what was it I had to do?” moments when participants got home.

The intergenerational nature of the event worked really well, with a lot of mutual respect between participants and students and some really positive feedback at the end of the sessions, and a hope that there would be similar sessions in the future. One lady told us her grandchildren had set up both Skype and Facebook on her computer, but she didn’t have a clue how to use them. By the end she could use both! Several people told us they desperately wanted to use Skype to keep in contact with family living a long way away, but had not been able to pluck up the courage to download and use it. They all went away with big smiles on their faces and were anxious to get home to try out their new skills. The Librarian at the college said “It’s been a brilliant afternoon – both the students and the older people seem to have really enjoyed themselves.”

A few weeks later we heard that our event for the second year running had been selected as one of the six finalists for the Spring Online Best Event Award. In September our Events Organiser, Carol Hodge, (pictured above in the centre) together with Committee Member Jackie Jackson (left), attended the Awards Ceremony at the BT Tower in London and were presented with a Highly Commended certificate by the Guest of Honour, Esther Rantzen.

Visit our website: www.wealden-scp.org
Keeping warm keeps you well, but being cold in your home can make you ill

A cosy cuppa will help keep you warm

Having plenty of hot drinks like tea, coffee or hot water will help to keep you warm. Only boil as much water as you need and this will save you money too!

Don’t let cold catch you out – have some food in the house

Protect yourself this winter – have your flu jab

Make sure you can get your medicines if the weather turns cold

Are you getting all you are entitled to?

Get free advice on saving energy at home

For FREE independent help and advice on how to save energy in your home, call 0300 123 1234

Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm; Saturday 10am to 2pm

Struggling to keep warm? – you may be able to get some help

Keeping snug and warm in your home is vital to protect your health.

Having your flu jab could stop you being seriously ill this winter. Flu is much more serious than a cold; it often leads to a hospital stay and can be fatal! Protect yourself by making sure that you get your flu jab. If you are over 65 years old or have a long term health condition, this is FREE. Call your Doctor today or ask a carer to ensure you get yours!

Your medicines help to keep you well and you don’t want to run out if the weather is bad.

If bad weather is forecast, make sure you have the medicines you need in case you cannot go out of the house or check with the people who normally get them for you.

Keep warm and cosy this winter by checking if you can get extra benefits or help to insulate your home from the cold.

For details of schemes where financial help is available to all irrespective of income call the Energy Efficiency Hotline on 01323 443321. Grants of up to 100% of the cost of works may be available to qualifying households.

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Many people spend more than ten per cent of their income on fuel bills, in some cases as much as 25 per cent. People who have assets and manage normally to pay bills are now really struggling because of huge increases in fuel bills.

Thanks to a new fuel poverty project help is at hand for families and elderly people faced with no longer being able to afford to heat their homes. The Citizens’ Advice Bureau is going out into the community, also targeting parish councils so they can help residents who would not normally come into the bureau.

Under the new scheme, funded by the Scottish Power Energy Trust, the Citizens Advice Bureau has been sending Carol Clark, a fuel poverty worker, to talk to elderly people and families in community centres across Wealden to help them get the benefits they are entitled to and trying to reach groups, that find it difficult to access the Bureau’s services. She is finding that they are not claiming what they are entitled to, such as pension credits.

Mrs Clark recently carried out a benefits check on an elderly couple in Heathfield, who owned their home and had a small amount of savings but were still finding it difficult to pay their bills.

She said: “Their savings were dwindling fast and they were living very frugally. I did a check and they were entitled to £50 a week through council tax benefits and pension credits.”

Anyone needing advice on energy efficient schemes, debt or benefits should call 01825 764940 or visit www.bigenergyweek.co.uk

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**Top Tips for keeping warm this winter**

- Check you are up-to-date with any recommended immunisations, for example a seasonal flu jab. Speak to your GP for further information
- Keep smoke alarms in working order
- Ensure you have an adequate supply of any essential prescriptions and order them in good time
- Stock up with a few non-perishable items of food so you don’t need to go out if it becomes icy. You can freeze semi-skimmed milk in plastic bottles
- Keep some salt or sand gritting mixture for sprinkling on pathways and door steps in case it becomes icy outside
- Shut curtains at dusk to help to keep as much warmth inside the home as possible
- Wear several thin layers rather than one chunky layer as it should keep you warmer
- Keep warmer at night by wearing warm clothing in bed
- Use a hot water bottle or an electric blanket at night in bed but never at the same time
- Drink warm drinks regularly
- Eat at least one warm meal a day. This will help provide energy as well as warmth
- Keep as active as possible. If it is difficult to move around, move your arms and wiggle fingers and toes to help get circulation going
- Wear thermals to trap as much warmth as possible
- Aim to keep occupied rooms heated at around 18-21C (64-70F). Ideally keep the main living room you use heated at 21C
- Use the timer and thermostat on the heating system
- Keep doors closed to help reduce draughts, and use a door draught excluder (sausage) along the bottom of the door
- Wear a coat, hat, gloves, scarf and wear shoes or boots with a non-slip sole when you go outside

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**COMMITTEE CONTACT DETAILS**

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*SIG = Special Interest Group
OUR EVENTS IN 2012 AND 2013

Silver Surfers Day – See report on page 1.
At three “Alternative Games” events in Wadhurst, Pevensey Bay & Herstmonceux, those who came were able to play the games of their childhood whilst enjoying tea and cake. Two taster sessions were also held in Uckfield, at Streatfeild House and Margaret House. The events in Wadhurst and Pevensey Bay were not as popular as we had hoped, but the one at Herstmonceux was well attended thanks to the efforts of Ray and Eileen Twort and Rene Cochrane, who have since agreed to join our committee. In all instances, participants said how much they had enjoyed the afternoon. The taster session at Margaret House in Uckfield proved very successful, and a Games Group will be meeting there in future. The games purchased for these events are now on permanent loan to that group, with the proviso that we can use them if and when needed.

At our Golf Afternoon at the Boars Head Golf Centre participants were able to try their hand at golf by spending an hour on the range with the Golf Pro. Those who were already golfers were able to play 9 holes at a specially negotiated price. This was not as well attended as we had hoped, but participants again expressed their enjoyment of the afternoon. Two people booked to go for lessons and three others were planning to do the same.

Finally, we held an event entitled Live, Laugh, Learn in celebration of Older People’s Day in Hailsham at which participants were able to try Laughter Therapy, Skittles, Boccia, Quoits, Giant Chess, Catchphrase and listen to a talk by poet Joan Harding which demonstrated that it is never too late to learn. The attendance was good, and many participants tried their hand at virtually all of the physical activities on offer. Freedom Leisure staff were there so people were able to find out where these activities were available. Organisations manning information stands reported a high level of interest in their services.

Evaluation Forms were completed at the end of every event which showed a high level of enjoyment at all of the events and included suggestions for future activities.

Our aim in 2012 was to take activities to a wide range of locations in the Wealden area, and this we succeeded in doing. But we did not reach as many people as we would have liked, and we have given a lot of thought to how we might improve uptake this year.

The theme for our main events in 2013 will be “COMPUTERS & COOKERY FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE”. In February, Hailsham Town Council & Hailsham Community College have invited us to join them in arranging a Silver Surfers’ Day at Hailsham Community College (see enclosed flyer). We will arrange another Spring Online Event in April during the National Spring Online with Silver Surfers’ Week again in Hailsham. Those who come will be able to find out how to research into family history, set up a family tree etc. and how to use Google Maps to find places where they used to live as a child and see what changes there have been in that location. Our third main event in October will celebrate Older People’s Day and include our AGM and we have invited the Community Chef to do a presentation on the subject of healthy diet and cooking for one on a limited budget including cooking for men. We will also invite various organisations providing services for older people to set up and man information stands to offer help and advice on what is available in both Wealden and nationally.

In March, May, June, July, September and November we are planning to hold coffee mornings in a variety of locations, each with a specific theme. An outline programme is enclosed - more information in the next newsletter.

The Wealden Senior Citizens’ Partnership is a member of ESSA - The East Sussex Seniors’ Association - “The Voice of Older People”