

WOLVERHAMPTON RHEUMATOLOGY SUPPORT GROUP

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Friday 28th October 2011

CHAIRPERSON REPORT

It is with pleasure that I return again this year to present the Chairpersons report for the WRSG. I am also happy to report that for another year the group remains very healthy and active, continuing to flourish with over 160 members enjoying the benefits that stem from the original concept of supporting Wolverhampton residents who have Arthritis.

Whilst preparing to write this report I have again revisited the original broad objectives of the WRSG and whilst reflecting upon the past year I can report that the group are achieving them all and in some cases excelling due to the hard work and commitment from our committee and members

Objective: 'To support our members'

Supporting WRSG members is our main objective. We continue to work hard in order to meet this, the telephone help line is manned by Pat Jones and Julie Hibbs and myself. All calls are confidential and as far as possible we are able to refer members to the appropriate services for assistance. We continue to work closely with Health, Social and Voluntary sectors and are grateful for their continuing support.

During this year the group have finally developed the 'Buddy Scheme' which doesn't replace the help line but has proved to enhance this service. A Policy Statement for the Buddy Scheme was approved in November 2010. The scheme is constantly reviewed and I am pleased to report that it is working very effectively.

Definition of Buddy Scheme:

Essentially the Buddy scheme is a befriending service which is available for all new members of the Wolverhampton Rheumatology support Group (WRSG). Each new member is informed of the scheme and may or may not choose to participate.

Buddies' are usually established members of the WRSG who have Arthritis themselves or who have someone close to them that has Arthritis.

Individuals who have concerns about issues relating to Arthritis can discuss them confidentially with a buddy who has been through a similar experience.

New members will be offered a buddy in the first instance as a point of contact and peer support for coffee mornings and other activities that the WRSG offer.

Coordination of the Buddy Scheme

The scheme is overseen by a trustee of the WRSG committee initially myself. Members of the committee have agreed to participate. Anne Pengelly (member of the WRSG) is also involved in the scheme. It would be so nice to extend the scheme involving more members although there is growing evidence of therapeutic relationships forming among members at our coffee mornings and WRSG events.

Initially the buddy scheme has operated within carefully defined boundaries. A buddy is selected either by post code or similar interests for each new member. Essentially the buddy agrees to

telephone the new member and ideally, arrange to meet them at the first coffee morning organised by the WRSB. Not all new members feel they need a buddy but if the new member wants to Participate in the scheme they can be sure of a befriending relationship which is facilitated either by telephone links, emails or meeting at coffee mornings.

The boundaries of the buddy scheme are strictly defined to therapeutic relationships. The buddies are able to advise the new member, for example: benefits enquiries, equipment loans, social services and similar services. It is strongly recognised that the buddy is not in a position to give medical or social advice but to direct the new member to the appropriate service. The buddies have a list of useful telephone numbers as a source of information and knowledge of whom to contact.

The buddy has an open door policy to contact me for support and advice. The Committee members of the WRSB provide peer support to each other and to all buddies.

Objective: 'To facilitate Education and Information Sessions'

During 2010/2011 we have organised several sessions to inform our members about issues relating to their Arthritis. In July 2010 Mary Shipway delivered an excellent session on Reflexology, October 2010 we invited a local company to demonstrate arise and motion beds and raiser recliner chairs. In February 2011 Hugh Gaskin (Podiatrist WCPCT) gave a very informative presentation of the importance of foot care. In May 2011 Sister Rowlands from New Cross Hospital talked to our members about Osteoporosis at a level that we could all understand and relate to. All of these presentations were followed up with articles for the Newsletter to inform members who are unable to attend our coffee mornings.

During this year we have secured funding through a grant from the Midcounties Co-operative Community Foundation Fund for £1500. Our application was approved to purchase a Challenging Arthritis Course from Arthritis Care UK. The course will be offered to our members and will commence in February 2012.

For next year we are planning to include more member participative workshops, topics will be chosen to address members experience such as managing pain, healthy eating, mobility etc:

WRSB Newsletter.

The bi monthly WRSB Newsletter is an important vehicle of communication for our members. It is however costly to sustain. This year costs reached £913. 98. The committee are grateful for donations to the group that allow us to continue with the Newsletter. I have cut down on some postal costs by e mailing the Newsletter to those members who are agreeable. We will however continue to mail the Newsletter to all other members. We are proud to say that the 100th edition of the Newsletter was published in August this year.

I am indebted to Martin Peake who has kindly taken responsibility of managing the WRSB website www.wrsg.org.uk Martin updates the site with the Home page and contact details, Newsletter, invitations to coffee mornings, information sessions, future holidays and trips, he has also included links and information regarding Arthritis. This is a huge technological aspect of the WRSB that none of us are qualified to do, thank you so much Martin.

Thanks are also due to our professional colleagues for articles included in the Newsletter. Sister Ruth Harper for her article on Gout, Sister Jane Fairbrace for her article on the Present and Forward to the Future of the Rheumatology Department New Cross Hospital, Mary Shipway for her article on Reflexology, Walking for Health by Bhagwant Sachdeva and Sister Norma Rowland for her article on

Osteoporosis. Thanks also to Debbie Mitton who keeps me informed and up to date with changes within the Rheumatology Department.

The Newsletter has also featured One Voice Disability Network, a number of our members enjoyed a Health and Fitness day at Aldersley Stadium and a free induction to the gym levelled at the individual needs regarding Arthritis and physical ability. We have even achieved members taking up Bowls at Bradmore Bowl's club due to an article in the Newsletter.

Objective: 'Sharing is Caring Social Network'

Our monthly coffee mornings held here at Linden House on the first Monday of every month are becoming more and more popular. Thanks to Joyce Knibbs who is responsible for booking guest speakers and liaising with Linden House we hope we are able to facilitate for all of our members interests. This year Joyce has booked a Christmas lunch for our members this is a first and I can report that over 60 members will be attending.

Our social calendar this past year included a holiday to the Lochs and Glens in January 2011 to celebrate Burns Night, and an Aegean Cruise starting at Corfu and visiting Greece, Crete and Turkey in May 2010.

In June 2011 the group enjoyed a day trip to Southport and later in the month a tour of Banks' Brewery to observe the brewing process (tasting was obligatory!) In September the group had a carvery lunch at the Mill Farm Cannock and a coach ride over Cannock Chase finishing off the afternoon with a visit to a garden centre.

Donations and Grants

We are so grateful for everyone who has financially supported the group. Monies raised from raffles, cake competitions and bring and buy sales do help with the running costs of our coffee mornings and other events. It means that we are able to maintain our membership fee at the same level of £5 for individual annual membership and £8 for family membership.

Thanks to the families of Mrs Florence May, Mrs Brenda Mullaney, Mr and Mrs Benn and Mrs Carol Boneham for their donations to the group which amounted to £1063. Our thanks to Codsall Towns Women's Guild for their donation of £510 and our thanks to Arise and Motion Mobility for their kind donation of £50.

In Conclusion

May I take this opportunity to thank all of our committee members for their hard work and to report that sadly Julie Hibbs is resigning from the committee; Julie will however continue to support the WRSB by organising and delivering the Challenging Arthritis Course in collaboration with her role with Arthritis Care UK

Special thanks go to Terry and Kath Judd for their help with storing the WRSB equipment and to Anne Pengally for joining the Buddy Scheme. Also thank you to husbands and partners for the invaluable help we have at the coffee mornings, Tony and Brian we couldn't do it without you.

And finally thank you to you the members for your continuing support.

Liz Walker (Chairperson WRSB)

September 2011