

Better Toilet Provision for Older Londoners

The Mayor launches his Open London Scheme

There has been a 40 per cent decline in public toilets in the capital since 1999. The decline has particularly affected older Londoners and families with small children. On 18 March, in line with his manifesto commitment to improve quality of life for Londoners and people who visit the city, the Mayor of London launched his Open London Scheme. The scheme allows the public to use the toilet facilities of key business chains without the need to make a purchase.

Tesco, John Lewis, Borders, Sainsbury's and Marks and Spencer have become the first companies to sign up to Open London, which aims to increase public access to toilets in the capital. The

Mayor hopes that businesses across the capital will follow their example. Boris Johnson does not support the closure of the existing network of locally owned and operated public toilets, nor does he believe that Open London should be a substitute for local authority public toilets. The scheme will, however, complement this provision.

Boris Johnson said, 'I know from speaking to older Londoners and families with kids that the decline in the number of public toilets can make a visit to the capital a frustrating experience [...] Letting people know where they can use the toilet, and encouraging businesses to open their facilities to the public, will not only make the city a more civilised and pleasant place to live but also to visit.'

Diary Dates

May 15 2009 from 1pm
Participants meeting
Committee Rooms 4 & 5,
City Hall

May 15 2009 from noon
Silver Surfers Activities
Conference Room 10,
City Hall

July 10 2009
London Older People's Assembly
The Chamber, City Hall

August 27 2009 1-4pm
AGM
Committee Rooms 4&5,
City Hall

November 6 2009
from 1pm
Participants' Meeting
Committee Rooms 4&5,
City Hall

Extension to the Freedom Pass

From 2 January Freedom Passes became available on a 24-hour basis.

LOPSG members will know that this was a manifesto promise by the Mayor. The Freedom Pass scheme is managed by London Councils under the Chairmanship of Merrick Cockell. London Councils manages a number of pan London services including Taxicard concession. Our London Freedom Pass is now valid on local bus services throughout the county but not on long distance coach services.

Unfortunately the Freedom Pass is still not available on network rail trains from

9:30am although the Mayor is negotiating to try to get this extended to 24 hours.

Since pensioners now have no need of Oyster cards unless they keep them for friends visiting from other towns or from abroad, they may hand them in and claim a refund of the deposit and any cash still on the card at any London Transport ticket office.

An added bonus of the Freedom Pass that members may not be aware of is free entry to the London Transport Museum at Covent Garden, which is well worth a visit after its recent refurbishment.

Launch of the Mayor's Benefits Take Up Campaign

Many older Londoners are missing out on a range of benefits they have worked hard over their lives to earn, as are many carers who provide care and support to others.

This why on the 9 January 2009 the Mayor, Boris Johnson, and I launched the first in an annual benefits take up campaign urging older Londoners and carers to claim the benefits to which they may be entitled.

It is estimated that up to a third of older Londoners do not claim benefits they are entitled to. Many pensioners could be eligible for around £50 a week in additional cash. Over their lifetime they could be losing out on up to £50,000 in unclaimed benefits. Equally many carers do not claim all the benefits they are entitled to including Carers Allowance which can give them an extra £27 a week.

Sums of money like this can make a real difference to the lives of older people and carers and both the Mayor and I are determined to do all that we can to help people claim money to which they are entitled.

Some people think that if they own their home or have savings they won't qualify for any help but this isn't always the case. Some

benefits, such as Attendance Allowance, are not paid according to income but disability.

Other people don't claim because they don't know how to, face language problems or are put off by long, complicated forms. Others are concerned that they may lose other benefits if their income is checked. Indeed, the whole claims process can seem both impersonal and intrusive.

However, experience shows that the best way to get people the information and help they need to claim is by face to face advice work. This is why the Mayor teamed up with Citizens Advice, Age Concern London and the Princess Royal Trust for Carers to offer free, impartial advice and help in making a claim.

All people have to do is contact their local advice centre and they will be happy to help in anyway they can from checking entitlement to filling in forms.

The Energy Saving Trust is also part of this campaign. They offer free practical advice and assistance on cutting heating bills and making your home warmer. They can also offer advice on what grants may be available for older people to help install insulation and central heating

or energy efficiency measures in the home. The Energy Saving Trust provides a free telephone helpline service. The number is 0800 512 012.

The Mayor will be building on the success of this year's campaign to include all Londoners from next year. In the current financial climate it is important people claim their full entitlements including help to tackle fuel poverty.

So I would urge all older people and carers to get in touch with their local CAB, Age Concern or carers centre to find out what extra help they could be entitled to. It really could make a big difference to your life.

Richard Barnes
Deputy Mayor of London



Ellen Lebethe and Graeme Matthews with the Mayor at the press launch

LOPSG

London Older People's Strategies Group

Strategy

www.lopsg.org.uk

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LOPSG in its ninth year

In the Millennium year the Greater London Authority was created restoring a central government for the city after a 13-year gap after the demise of the GLC. The principal London older people's organisations at the time decided that there should be a body of volunteers with the specific role of bringing older people's issues and concerns to the attention of the new authority and Mayor.

With the help of a small grant from Help the Aged the first LOPSG committee quickly developed a wide network of member groups across London and as a result of this and their vigorous lobbying were accepted as the principal group for the Mayor's consultation on older people's issues. It quickly became clear that to be effective, older people needed a centre to provide logistic support to them. Our lobbying on this issue bore fruit in the establishment by the GLA of the London Older People's Resource Facility with two dedicated GLA project officers. The support of the Facility has enabled LOPSG and others to work at

a professional level for older people through a very full and varied programme of events and activities. The vast amount of work undertaken by Capital Age Festival in producing a hugely successful Festival every year since 2003 has only been possible with the dedicated support of the Facility staff.

Occasionally we have to remind new members that we were not created by the GLA and are not directly funded by it. As a registered charity we are dependent on bidding for charitable funding and on generous donations from members. However we are grateful to the GLA for the wide range of support in kind they provide.

We are pleased that we have been able to establish positive relationship with the new Mayor's administration. The future will inevitably bring changes in ways of operating due to the reorganisation that is being undertaken at City Hall. LOPSG officers are keeping in close touch with Deputy Mayor, Richard Barnes and GLA officers to ensure that the scope and value of our



work is understood and that maximum support continues.

It's clear that the present difficult economic situation will pose a huge challenge to all forms of help and support for older people and can only ensure that the work of all organisations in the field, both voluntary and professional, is increasingly vital. To meet these challenges we need the support of all members, particularly those with skills and some time to spare. At our AGM on 27 August we hope to recruit not just a committee but also a group of volunteers to help with a range of tasks such as the organisation of meetings, publicity, fundraising, journal editing etc.

Graeme Matthews
Secretary, LOPSG

Editorial Comments

I was recently asked on what day do you consider yourself to be old. In fact, it is a good question. The answer – when you reach a big 'O', retirement age, 50+, as old as you feel? I recall a very young cousin trying to guess my mother's age. He started at 14 years. However, he could only count up to 17, so my mother ended it there and agreed she was 17. The child was appalled she was so old. Good job she did not tell him she was 84!

With an aging population, generally in better health than ever before, it would seem that almost half one's lifetime can be categorised as 'old'. In reality, older people are citizens like everyone else. Many are extremely active and provide vast resources within the community. Many are looking after grandchildren and often supporting elderly parents at the same time.

LOPSG has been delighted to work with the GLA Peer Outreach Team at two major events at City Hall. This, we hope, is the beginning of an ongoing dialogue on how different generations can work together. So let us start the great intergenerational debate. Let us encourage people in their 50s and 60s, with their considerable experience, to join us and work for a better future, not just for the current 'elderly', but the generations following. One topic at our

assembly meeting in July will be on intergenerational issues. We hope you can be there. Watch this space!

LOPSG has been invited to be a member of the Advisory Panel brought together to comment on and drive forward the Mayor's Older People Action Plan, launched in March 2009. The panel is chaired by Deputy Mayor of London, Richard Barnes. We will be keeping members fully informed of developments and will also be working with the Mayor's office to provide opportunities for you to comment on the action plan yourselves.

I would also like to wish Nabs Stelter, GLA Acting Senior Project Officer for Older People, all the best for the next few months while she takes leave to have her first baby. Thank you for all your input to LOPSG over the last two and a half years. From the beginning of June 2009, in Nabs' absence, if you need to get in touch with City Hall, please contact Tracy Page on 020 7983 4636 or email Tracy.Page@london.gov.uk, who will be able to direct you to the appropriate individual.

We would like to pass our condolences onto the family and friends of Jack Jones, who passed away in April. Jack participated in early LOPSG meetings and we were saddened to hear of his loss.

Eileen McNally Chair LOPSG

Contributions to LOPSG to 24 April 2009

Aug 2008 Beryl Strong • **Sept 2008** M S Windisch • **Oct 2008** David Hogarth; Harry Frankland; Hannah Maier; Rod and Pat Brown; Kingston Pensioners Forum • **Nov 2008** Tom Goff; C Abeyawardene • **Dec 2008** E L Perez; Unison Greater London Gas- Retd • **Feb 2009** Harrow POP • **March 2009** Richmond on Thames OP • **April 2009** Lewisham Pensioners Forum; Civil Service Pensioners Alliance; CWU West London Retired Members • **Total £671.00**

LOPSG is very grateful to the above members for their generous contributions to our funds.

New Members

Roy Baker Hammersmith and Fulham Pensioners Forum; **Gee Bernard** Croydon African Caribbean Family Organisation; **Doreen Boon** Individual Member; **Beryl Edwards** Individual Member; **Dina Jung** Individual Member; **Jenny Lam** Chinese National Healthy Living Centre; **Juan Luis Martinez** Individual Member; **Doug Miles** London Telecare Group; **Angela O'Malley** Northwood Live at Home; **Helen Williamson** Individual Member; **Richard Wisdom** Individual Member

Crime, Security & Older People

Our successful Participants Meeting on Crime, Security and Older People was held at City Hall on 6 November 2009. We were fortunate to have as speakers John Flatley from the Home Office Statistics Unit, Anne Elledge from the Suzi Lamplugh Trust and young members of the Peer Outreach Team.

The meeting was organised in cabaret fashion whereby after a short session of general questions from the floor members discuss important questions relating to the theme in groups and

feed back their views on individual postit notes. The volume, diversity and quality of the feedback obtained in this way is impressive and invaluable. In particular the feedback from this meeting provided an important basis for the GLA's conference on Crime and Older People held on 6 March, which was chaired and facilitated by LOPSG committee members, and is now providing an essential body of reference for us in assisting the Metropolitan Police Service on the creation of its own Older People's Strategy.



Members of the Peer Outreach Group with LOPSG Chair Eileen McNally at the November Participants' Meeting at which they gave a presentation

We would like to express our appreciation for the enthusiasm and commitment of the over 90 members who took part in the meeting.

LOPSG Equalities and Diversity Working Group

A newly formed Equalities and Diversity working group, under the chairmanship of Ellen Lebethe, has recently been adopted by the LOPSG Management Committee.

The first step in formation of the group was an exploratory meeting on 14 November 2009 to which interested LOPSG members were invited to discuss the principles and issues that underpin the concepts of Equality and Diversity. This was followed by a further meeting on 23 January 2009 when the group focussed on the future role of the E & D group within LOPSG and set out clear aims and objectives. The group was set up in accordance with the Frame of Reference agreed by the management

Committee to which it reports back regularly.

On 11 March the Group held a workshop entitled 'Making Things Happen' to help to formulate a realistic work plan and to discuss how to apply strategies developed in the session to our local membership groups.

As part of its role in monitoring Equality and Diversity policy and practices for London's older people the Group recently submitted a response, on behalf of LOPSG, to the Mayor's consultation on his 'Equal Life Chances for All' equalities framework document.

The E & D Group fulfils the essential function of ensuring

that equal opportunities and non-discrimination remain the bedrock on which LOPSG is founded. It is hoped that members with experience of and interest in these issues will become involved with the group. We would certainly welcome your input and contribution.

Ellen Lebethe
LOPSG Committee Member

Strategy is the newsletter of LOPSG. Views expressed in *Strategy* do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or of LOPSG. You may contact the editorial committee by emailing secretary@lopsg.org.uk

Pause for reflection as the Capital Age Festival renews itself

Regretfully we have had to cancel the festival planned for August this year. Watch out for CAF 09 new programme of events!

CAF achieved a stunning success in June and July 2008, with its innovative workshops and mini-festivals across London, culminating in its acclaimed central festival, 9 July, at the Royal Festival Hall. From small, but adventurous beginnings in 2002, CAF has grown and diversified. It is now an arts company, governed by older people, acknowledged for its innovation and excellence by leading arts companies and funding bodies. CAF remains firmly at the core of the LOPSG organisation. CAF's vision, its aims and objectives stem from LOPSG's Cultural Sub-Group, formed in 2000. LOPSG's cultural heartland is continually being invigorated by the power, imagination and artistry of its individual members, its volunteers and its ever-widening circle of new groups.

The CAF Directors are delighted now to introduce you to Paul Margrave, CAF's talented, new Operational & Artistic Director. His broad experience of the arts, working with both older and younger people, his knowledge of the arts and older people movement in London and its key arts companies, together with his administrative and fundraising skills, make him the ideal person to fill this challenging role.

At this important moment, as we look ahead to the Cultural Olympiad and 2012, CAF has a multitude of opportunities. We are fortunate that its work, as the cultural & artistic wing of LOPSG, is strongly supported by the Mayor of London and by the Deputy Mayor, Richard Barnes, who enthusiastically opened the Festival last year at the Southbank Centre. We are grateful for their understanding of CAF's contribution to the arts and of the importance of the participatory arts to the well-being of all



Capital Age Festival dancers celebrating the launch of the CAF Big Chair Dance DVD at the Southbank Centre's Purcell Room on 16 February 2009

older citizens across the Capital. We look to them to support our proposals in the future.

Paul has a number of exciting proposals for this year, broadening the artistic range, developing new workshops, making linkage with present and new key partners, plus research and development. We all look forward to CAF taking another thrilling surge forward. We will keep you informed.

After eight years, leading cultural policy and the operational role at CAF, I am now taking an advisory role. On behalf of the CAF Directors and Management Committee, I should like to express my great appreciation for the inestimable practical support and encouragement given over the years by the GLA Project Officers, Charlotte Smith, Anna Roberts and currently Nabs Stelter. Our grateful thanks to all of them!

Joan Bennetto
LOPSG Committee Member

How to join: Membership of LOPSG is free, and is open to individuals, and representatives of London organisations. If you, or your organisation, would like to join, or find out more about LOPSG please contact Graeme Matthews (Secretary) on 01895 631905.