

# The Relatives & Residents Association (Essex)

# Newsletter



## Issue No 3 March 2009

### Welcome to the third R&RA(Essex) Newsletter, and the first of 2009!

A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since our last news bulletin. This time last year the exciting project to set up the Essex branch of the Relatives and Residents Association had only just begun. All the hard preparatory work culminated in the official Launch last October and in this Newsletter we will bring you up to date with all the news and developments since then.

Most importantly, though, we would like to thank all the people who have helped us in so many ways to get to this point.

Where would we have been, without the advice and support of our sponsors, the various officers of the participating Councils, the Voluntary Organisations with whom we are working and, above all, to the Chairman and members of the Core Development Group who have given their time and wisdom from the outset? They are the backbone of this enterprise. We are equally grateful to the Chief Executive, staff and volunteers of the national R&RA, who have given us unstinting support and encouragement from the outset.

Since the Launch in October, we have gained a new and growing group of supporters. These are our Founder Members and, most recently of all, our small, but growing band of volunteers.

These are the generous people who have offered their time and expertise to help us move forward.

One of the great pleasures of being involved with the R&RA(Essex) has been the warm welcome that we have encountered in so many quarters and opportunity to meet and work with so many generous and dedicated people.

**Thank you all!**

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## News from the R&RA(Essex)

### The Launch

October 21st 2008 was a big day for us. Lord Hanningfield, whose initiative triggered the whole project, joined with our Chairman, Barbara Williamson, who has been with us from the start, to give the R&RA(Essex) its official send-off by “unveiling” the website and the Helpline.

Also present were many members of the Core Development Group and our good friend and ally, Gillian Dalley, Chief Executive of the national Relatives and Residents Association.

We were delighted to see about 70 invited guests who took the time to come and wish us well. Members of the press also came along.

Our special thanks go to David Grocott and Jyoti Varia who worked so hard behind the scenes to make sure this event went without a hitch.



**L to R:** Barbara Williamson, Lord Hanningfield and Gillian Dalley at the Launch event

### The Core Services

The **Helplines** went “live” at the end of September in preparation for the Launch and the website was opened for business at the event.

We are getting a steady stream of calls, many of which lead to long discussions, and Chris Ardill, the Helpline Manager and his staff will always stay in touch with callers as long as their help is needed. We are already getting some most appreciative feedback from people who have used the Helplines.



The topic most often raised is the vexed question of funding and we are pleased that we are starting to be in touch with some of the “self funders” whom we had particularly in mind when this project was first planned. Chris combines a very warm and sympathetic personality with a formidable expertise in all aspects of residential care, including the intricacies of law and practice in relation to funding, so we get a lot of good feedback from people who have used this service.

Our priority now is to make sure the Helpline is truly “local”. This means keeping in close touch with the Helpline team so that they can build up their knowledge of Essex, Southend and Thurrock and we can share their understanding of the national scene. To this end, Chris will be visiting us in Essex to get to know how we work here and meet some of the key people involved. He has also offered his services to help with training for volunteers and we look forward to a close and fruitful collaboration with the Helpline team.

The **website** is designed both to tell people about the Association and to help people locate other reliable sources of information about many different aspects of residential care, both nationally and locally. We are always looking to update and improve it in order to make it as useful and easy to navigate as possible. We are also getting a steady stream of comments and enquiries through the contact page on the site, some of which have already helped us to make it more user friendly. If you would like to comment or make suggestions to help us do this, we will be delighted to hear from you.



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## The Local Networks - Volunteers

It has always been our aim to build up a network of local representatives and volunteers who can supplement the work of the Helpline by promoting our services in their own communities and, in due course, by providing practical help and support to people who may need it.

In other parts of the country, local groups have been able to offer a variety of services. These have included support groups for people going through the process of helping relatives move in and adjust to life in residential care; practical help with searching for and interpreting inspection reports; accompanying people on visits to Homes; getting to know and spending time with residents who may welcome some visits and support and responding to other needs as they become apparent.

We are lucky enough to found a small, but growing, band of excellent volunteers (or rather, they found us!) who are just starting to pioneer these ideas in different parts of Essex. At the moment we are concentrating on publicity and relationships with local people and organisations, but we are hoping this will be the start of a county wide development.

We hope to work in partnership with existing, compatible organisations

Our volunteers will be working to a Code of Practice and will not be expected to give specialist advice, but rather, to encourage people to use the Helpline. Of course, anybody who offers direct services will need to be police checked and we will offer all the necessary training and support.

If you would like to help, or know somebody who would, we would be delighted to hear from you!



## Publicity

However good our services may be, they are no use at all to people who don't know about them. A top priority for us all is to spread the word as widely as possible.

We now have some very attractive posters, leaflets and bookmarks to distribute wherever they may catch people's eyes. We are also keen to make links with other organisations that may come into contact with people who need the kind of help we can give and to explore all the different ways in which we can publicise the Helpline and website. We also had an excellent response to an interview with the Helpline Manager, Chris Ardill, on Radio Essex and have articles published in various places, including Parish Magazines.

Some Members and other friends who attended the County Council's annual Quality Conference on the day before the Launch will remember Core Group member Tom Cooper's monologue that was used as an introduction to the R&RA(Essex) This is now available on a very professionally produced DVD and Tom has offered to be available to make presentations to local groups and others who may be interested. If anyone would like us to arrange a presentation or attend to a meeting to discuss our work (including residents and relatives meetings in Care Homes) we will be pleased to arrange for someone to come along.



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## Membership

The R&RA(Essex) has a dual purpose: to help older people and their families with all aspects of considering, choosing, moving into and living in residential care and to represent their interests to the authorities and organisations whose decisions and actions affect their interest.

Thinking about the second of these, we concluded that we really should be a “membership” organisation. This would allow us to make long term links with friends and stakeholders with whom we could work to develop our own activities and to learn from their experiences and ideas.

We decided to offer the status of “Founder Member” to any individual or corporate member joining before 31st March 2009. As an additional incentive, Founder Members will be exempt from any membership fees we may introduce (although these will always be modest) until 31st March 2010. We are delighted to report that we now have 78 members, with numbers more or less equally divided between individuals and corporate members, many of whom are Care Homes. Corporate members receive our Certificate of Membership which is designed to be displayed by anyone who wishes to do so.



If you are not a member and would like to join, or you know somebody who would be interested, please do get in touch, through the website or by phoning the Membership Secretary (Janet Russell) on 01621 868984. We shall be delighted to hear from you.

## The Development Officer

We are planning to employ a Development Officer, who will work on a part time basis to continue the work of building and developing the R&RA(Essex)

This employee will be home based, but we are also looking for a small office space where he or she can store some materials and, if possible, meet with other people who work in a comparable field and share the same interests and values.

We would also like to find “occasional” bases where he or she can “pop in” to use a phone or the internet or just relax and have a bite to eat when travelling around the county.



If you know of any likely spaces, or could offer the occasional use of a “pop in” corner, we would be delighted to hear from you. We will circulate the advertisement for the Development



Officer post shortly and we would be most grateful if members and friends could draw it to the attention of anyone you think may be interested in making an application.

## Evaluation

We are commissioning an independent evaluation of our first six months of operation. This will take place in the spring and we will be most grateful for input from members and other friends.

We will circulate more information about the process and how you can contribute shortly.

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## News From Our Members

*This is the section of the newsletter where we would like to include any news or announcements that you, our Founder Members, friends and stakeholders would like to send us.*

### Disclaimer

Material included in this section is for news and information only. Mention of any specific establishment or organisation does not imply that it is endorsed or recommended by the R&RA(Essex), Essex County Council, or any other sponsor of the Association.

To start us off, Elaine Manning, one of our Founder Members, has asked us to let people know about developments at Down Hall.

### **New Specialised Dementia Unit Opens June 2009**

Down Hall Residential Home, Bradwell on Sea, Essex has extended their services, providing a specialist unit for those people aged 65 and over, suffering with Dementia. Since February 2007 the home has taken new ownership and new management.

Down Hall is now owned by Mansion House Retirement Homes Ltd, The Directors are made up of Mrs Rita, Mr Peter and Son Simon Patten.

Down Hall has been completely refurbished, redecorated, and where needed altered to suit the needs of the home. The new unit has been added to the existing care home and has been specifically designed for people suffering from dementia. The Dementia unit is made up of a two-storey extension to Down Hall Residential Home, more than doubling the size of the home. It currently has registration for 16 Elderly Residents, but the extension will mean another 22 can be accommodated, the extension will all have en suite single rooms. The Home will have Sitting rooms/Dining areas, access to Sensory garden, quiet areas for relaxing, and a treatment room for the use of visiting Hairdresser, Doctor's, Nurses, Optician and Chiropodist. There will also be a Recreational room

The original building will be retained for the continuing care of the elderly people suffering from the disabilities and illnesses associated with old age.



For more information contact the Manager, Mrs Karen Johnson, on 01621 776509. We can also be found on the Website – [www.downhallcare.co.uk](http://www.downhallcare.co.uk) which has been recently launched.

### **Working with the Police Community Support Officers**

We have been delighted to welcome the Essex Police Service as a Corporate Founder Member.

Steve Kettle, the Extended Policing Family Co-ordinator, has offered to arrange for Police Community Support Officers to make contact with our Care Home members. They can then discuss any issues that Managers and staff may want to bring up, make links with the police service if necessary and, if members wish, give talks etc.

Several members have already agreed for us to pass on their contact details to Steve. If you would like to be included on the list, please do get in touch with us, or directly with Steve on 01245 457149 or email: [steve.kettle@essx.pnn.police.uk](mailto:steve.kettle@essx.pnn.police.uk)

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## “My Home Life”

We are delighted to report that Jan Lockyer, who has been closely involved with the R&RA(Essex) as Joint Project Manager has been appointed to work with “Help the Aged” to promote this project in Essex.

My Home Life (MHL) is a UK-wide charitable initiative aimed at promoting quality of life in care homes for older people, through relationship-centred and evidence-based practice. It is a collaborative scheme bringing together organisations which reflect the interests of care home providers, commissioners, regulators, care home residents and relatives and those interested in education, research and practice development.

The programme has been very positively received by the sector and is uniquely supported by all the national umbrella bodies for care homes including: National Care Forum, English Community Care Association, National Care Association, and Registered Nursing Home Association in England; Care Forum Wales; Scottish Care, and Independent Health and Care Providers in Northern Ireland

The evidence base for MHL was developed by over 60 academic researchers from universities across the UK (National Care Homes R&D Forum) and comprises 8 best practice themes.

The review of evidence used a process called appreciative inquiry which focused on looking only at research that explored ‘what residents want from care homes’ and ‘what practices work in care homes’. The positive stance of the review was valued by the sector and seen as a way to counterbalance the negative press surrounding care homes which has such a detrimental effect on the care that they provide.

The evidence was found to cluster around 8 themes:

**Managing Transitions:** Supporting people both to manage the loss & upheaval associated with going into a home and to move forward.

**Maintaining Identity:** Working creatively with residents to maintain their sense of personal identity and engage in meaningful activity.

**Creating Community:** Optimising relationships between and across staff, residents, family, friends and the wider local community. Encouraging a sense of security, continuity, belonging, purpose, achievement and significance for all

**Sharing Decision-making:** Facilitating informed risk-taking and the involvement of residents, relatives and staff in shared decision-making in all aspects of home life

**Improving Health & Healthcare:** Ensuring adequate access to healthcare services and promoting health to optimise resident quality of life

**Supporting Good End of Life:** Valuing the ‘living’ and dying’ in care homes and helping residents to prepare for a ‘good death’ with the support of their families.

**Keeping Workforce Fit for Purpose:** Identifying and meeting ever-changing training needs within the care home workforce

**Promoting a Positive Culture:** Developing leadership, management and expertise to deliver a culture of care where care homes are seen as a positive option.

We are pleased to be associated with this initiative and would be glad to hear from any Member or friend who would like to know more or get involved. If so, please contact Jan Lockyer on 01206 845131 or e mail: [jan.lockyer@essex.gov.uk](mailto:jan.lockyer@essex.gov.uk)

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## News from the National R&RA



For Quality of Life of  
Older People in Care

Over the past year we have forged close ties with our colleagues in London and we are most grateful for their unstinting support and co-operation. There is a link on our website to the site of the national Association and this is well worth taking a look for an overview of their work on the national stage as well as a lot of useful articles and publications.

Over the summer and autumn, the national Association organised two conferences to discuss the ways in which the health and well-being of older people living in residential care can be sustained and improved. The July conference, entitled "Will They Look After Her?" focused on the day to day maintenance of health in residential care. Amongst the topics discussed were dental care, hearing, eyesight, foot care, nutrition etc. In October, the second conference, entitled "Better Access to Health Care" moved on to the issues relating to medical care. Details of both conferences can be found on the website and in the Autumn 2008 Newsletter:

[http://www.relres.org/pdf/newsletters/RRA\\_Newsletter\\_Autumn08.pdf](http://www.relres.org/pdf/newsletters/RRA_Newsletter_Autumn08.pdf)

The national Association is very active on the research front as well and has recently published a report on the issues confronting people who fund their own residential care. This, of course, is an important concern for us in the Essex branch as well, since the idea of extending good information and support services to everyone living in our area was one of the key founding principles.

[http://www.relres.org/pdf/press-releases-articles/AD\\_Press\\_Release\\_23\\_July\\_08.pdf](http://www.relres.org/pdf/press-releases-articles/AD_Press_Release_23_July_08.pdf)

A new piece of work for R&RA, building on its existing interest in involving volunteers in care homes, is going to be a pilot project encouraging carefully chosen and well trained volunteers to befriend older care home residents reaching the later stages of their lives.

Most volunteering projects tend to concentrate on supporting activities in homes but this project will focus on building supportive, sensitive and reflective relationships with the very old and the very frail. It has received a grant from the NHS End of Life Care programme to undertake the work. R&RA hopes to involve some of Essex's care homes in the project.

## And From the Helpline....

**By way of illustration, here are just a few examples of the kinds of situations that crop everyday on the Helpline....**



An elderly man living in a care home in another borough, paying almost £1,000 per week, has been a self funder but has now spent down his savings and wants to move into the county but will need the county council's support. He will need to find out about eligibility criteria and financial assessment. His family called the advice line for advice on how to go about doing this.

A caller rang concerned about the quality of care her friend aged 91 was receiving in her care home. There are not enough activities during the day and she did not know what to do on her friend's behalf. Should she talk to the home, speak to social services or encourage her friend to move to another home?

A caller's mother in law had recently moved into a care home. She has a small amount of savings and a house to sell. The council has offered a deferred loan until the sale of the house goes through but says it cannot meet the full level of the care home fees and wants a third party (e.g. family or friend) to pay a 'top up' – the difference between the fee and the amount the council will pay.

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## “Mini-Feature 1”

### Nutrition for Older People

At the July Conference held by the national R&RA we heard from Dr. Lisa Wilson of the Caroline Walker Trust. This is a charity that specialises in promoting public health through good nutrition, with a special interest in vulnerable groups like the very young and the very old.



Lisa talked about good nutrition in care homes and made the point that food and drink should be readily available throughout the

day, so that people who may not necessarily feel hungry at set mealtimes can still be encouraged to eat enough for their needs. She also mentioned that the problem of dehydration is sometimes overlooked and stressed the need to make sure that people get plenty of fluids (eight cups per day is recommended) both from drinks and foods such as soups and porridge. She also emphasised the importance of fresh, tasty food, appetising presentation and choice to cater for different personal and cultural preferences.

The Caroline Walker Trust publishes some useful guidance on nutrition for older people, downloadable in pdf. format, details of which can be found here:

<http://www.cwt.org.uk/publications.html#older>

Another development recommended by Lisa is the idea of “protected mealtimes”. This means that mealtimes are held sacrosanct. Relatives and official visitors such as nurses etc. are encouraged to co-operate in making sure that visits don’t impinge on mealtimes, so that these can be uninterrupted and unhurried. We were pleased to hear from a care home manager who recently attended a conference in connection with the “My Home Life” programme that she had implemented this in her own home, with great success.

Lisa also mentioned that both Age Concern and the Royal College of Nursing have been running campaigns to improve nutritional care for older people in hospitals. Both have produced publications that are equally applicable to residential care and well worth reading.

Age Concern’s report “Hungry To Be Heard” is available here:

[http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/AgeConcern/Documents/Hungry\\_to\\_be\\_Heard\\_August\\_2006.pdf](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/AgeConcern/Documents/Hungry_to_be_Heard_August_2006.pdf)

and the RCN’s publications related to the “Nutrition Now” campaign can be found here:

<http://www.rcn.org.uk/newsevents/campaigns/nutritionnow>

### Getting in Touch

#### E Mail:

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