

# Wandsworth Older People's Forum

**NEWSLETTER Summer 2020**



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## Bringing out the best in us

First, the best. This issue of the newsletter is dedicated to the good that has come out of the pandemic: the kindness of neighbours, the helpfulness of strangers. Under the coordinating Hub of the council, the elderly in Wandsworth have relied on charitable organisations such as Regenerate-RISE, the Furzedown Project, the Katherine Low Settlement and Age UK pitching in with shopping and food deliveries, but also in new and imaginative ways to help combat the "loneliness epidemic" that has worsened during the self-isolation and shielding. In these pages, we follow two organisations that are providing older people with someone to chat to on the phone, and even to exercise with, the lack of which has also proved difficult during this period. These are set to continue after the pandemic is over.

Next, the worst. It is dispiriting to think about the ways scammers

## Dame Vera Lynn, 1917-2020

Interviewed on the BBC, a Chelsea Pensioner not much younger than the singer was asked: "How did you feel when you heard [she] had died?" "Well, I expected it to happen sometime," he replied, stoically. As Joan Bakewell commented: "We all have to die sometime". Even Vera. And she certainly lived longer than most, remaining relevant to the end. "We will meet again" resonated once again through the coronavirus pandemic.



## Fighting Temeraire keeps Covid blues at bay

Here we are, still in partial lockdown, so another (shorter) newsletter. I and a good many of our readers are aged over 70 and have stayed at home for 12 weeks or had to be especially careful; and I'm afraid must continue being careful for a while longer, even after 31 July when shielding officially ends. All shielders are to receive a letter from the NHS and have a talk with their GP. I am now hoping we might be able to have a committee meeting by September. The open meetings may have to wait due to numbers.

I hope you are all managing to find things to do during this weird period. I have watched, on television or on my computer, tours of various exhibitions that would now have been open in the London galleries and museums. I watched one on JMW Turner, the painter who appears on the £20 banknote. All the images on the note are squeezed into a composite design to beat the forgers; and his face is superimposed on his painting of *The Fighting Temeraire*. Another of the images is of the tower in Margate where he was born. I have never visited Margate. Something to plan for after the pandemic is finally over!



Fortunately, there has been plenty on TV for all tastes. The officers of the Forum have been particularly concerned for those of you who do not use email and the internet. At this time, when birthday parties and meetings can only be held online using Skype, Zoom or some other program, those not online can feel left out, not just from social occasions but also from sources of information. It may be many of you are now connected to the internet, persuaded by younger relatives. **If you are newly on email, please let us know**, and we will email this newsletter to you. However, we will continue to post copies to those who aren't. Keep well and safe and hopefully we shall meet again in the autumn. *Lilias Gillies/Hon Sec*

## Healthwatch Wandsworth

We want to know how digital or phone health and care appointments are working for you through the pandemic.

Either:

1) **Talk to Healthwatch Wandsworth on the phone** – call or email Healthwatch to make an individual appointment.

2) **Complete an online survey** (alternatively Healthwatch can post it to you)

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/HWWappointment.spr/>

**Call:** 020 8516 7767 between 10am – 4pm, Monday to Friday.

**Email:** [enquiries@healthwatchwandsworth.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchwandsworth.co.uk)

**Post:** Healthwatch Wandsworth, 3rd Floor Trident Business Centre, 89 Bickersteth Road, SW17 9SH.

# Keeping in touch with you all



When I was a girl there was a hymn we sang at school, “How Long, Oh Lord, How Long?” and during this lockdown I’m frequently reminded of it.

Most of our members are continuing to cope and manage, but for many, things are not going so well. Members who would pop out to post a letter or go to the corner shop, but then were shielded, have found that this lack of exercise and social interaction – minimal though it was – has made them frailer. Joints get creakier, bodies are just not warmed up. As a result they’re more trapped than they were before lockdown started. Add to this there is what is known as FOGO (Fear of Going Out) which is quite common now – in my generation too. We were forced to change our lives, can anyone doubt how hard it will be to change back?

The other thing is not all of our members have access to the internet and that, as time’s passed, has become a problem. The assumption that we all are on it is extremely irritating. It’s easy to Google “Exercises for Seniors” and watch programmes on iPlayer etc, but not if you haven’t got it.

However, it’s not all bad. Plenty of you have improved in the things you like and enjoy – more adventurous at cooking; better at drawing; a lovely clean house (not me); and cupboards “bottomed out” as me granny used to say.

The other thing is that when I see groups of people on the bit of Wandsworth Common that I walk on, they’re never older people, so I think you can give yourselves a pat on the back that you’re not sitting around in a gaggle breathing over each other.

To conclude, I want to say, if it’s not too yucky, how much I enjoy talking to you on the phone, whatever mood you’re in, and you all restore my faith in human nature.

**You can all give yourselves a pat on the back**

*Su Elliott*  
Membership Secretary

# Coronavirus Angels still flying in Battersea

As so often happens, a good idea began in a dream. In the middle of March this year, the Reverend Canon Simon Butler of St Mary’s Battersea woke up from a dream about angels. “Not angels as ‘messengers’,” he says, “but angels as ‘helpers.’”

“With the coronavirus lockdown imminent, we knew difficult times lay ahead,” says Reverend Butler, “and local people in Battersea would need help.”

Three days later, and a week before lockdown, Reverend Butler gathered together Father Hugh Preston of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Aaron Barbour, director of the Katherine Low Settlement. Together this alliance established the “Coronavirus Angels Battersea”. The mission was simple and clear: help people who need help.

By the weekend, Coronavirus Angels were distributing information flyers to 15,000 Battersea residents. “Working as a team worked well,” says volunteer, Peta Law, who, with her son Freddie Law, 18, and her daughter, Grace Law, 16, helped distribute leaflets. By the next day, the dedicated telephone number was getting calls and providing help to local residents began.

Residents like 80-year-old James Hunter who called “desperate for help. My children live in Bath and Brighton, and it was so very difficult to get my shopping done.” He was matched with volunteer Sonia Seder, “who has truly been an angel”, according to Hunter. “She goes out and sends me texts and photos of what is on the shelves, to make sure I get what I want.”

► **prey on innocent people, especially the vulnerable and the elderly. The pandemic is providing an ideal opportunity for these cynical crooks. In April, Ofcom warned of calls and texts from scammers posing as public health agencies and even Ofcom itself., pretending to be health workers or contact tracers offering tests and treatment.**

**Scammers have always been with us, and the Forum has often published advice and organised talks on the subject – eg, from the Met’s Cyber-Crime Unit in January.**

**As of 29 May, almost £4.7m had been lost in coronavirus scams and more than 2,000 people defrauded, according to ActionFraud. That figure will be much higher now.**

**It has also received more than 11,200 reports of coronavirus phishing emails, seeking to steal a user’s personal information.**

**Lockdown is easing on 4 July, but there is no doubt scammers will not stop and *Which?* magazine’s latest issue contains a helpful and detailed booklet on the latest scams.**

**As growing numbers of elderly people go online trying to stay connected to family and sources of information, the advice to “stay alert” should remain a watchword – not only against the virus but also against the scammers themselves.**

*Vicky Hutchings*  
Editor

[which.co.uk/cv-scams](http://which.co.uk/cv-scams)



**'Angel' Freddie Law: "We joked how she'd open the door and there I was wearing a mask!"**

After leafleting, Freddie Law decided to do more volunteering, shopping for a woman who had recently had surgery. "She's absolutely lovely and when I came to get her list," says Freddie, "we joked how times had changed, here she was opening up the door and there I was wearing a mask!"

But one community need that has become clearly evident in Battersea is the need for "befriending". To meet this, the Angels have trained more than 50

volunteers for their telephone-befriending programme – a programme they hope to carry out far into the future.

Now, with the easing of lockdown coming into sight, the Angels service has grown into a group of 425 volunteers, and the founders intend to continue the clearly needed service. Covid-19 has been a catalyst and kickstarted a now obvious and ongoing requirement to provide help throughout the community, whether people are housebound, disabled, older or disadvantaged in some other way.

Simple conversations can make a difference. One Angel conversation led to the Katherine Low Settlement loaning three iPads to Battersea's Meadbank Nursing Home, to help the residents stay in touch with their loved ones. The Katherine Low Settlement then raised £15,000 to keep the programme going. "For me it has been the

outpouring of care, compassion and love," says Aaron Barbour, director of the Settlement, "I know that sounds over the top, but it has been quite phenomenal, the rolling up of the sleeves and this spirit of national emergency and the fact we need to help people."

Although the lockdown is now relaxing, the connections and friendships Coronavirus Angels has formed look set to continue. "It has been wonderful to see people slow down, have time for one another, to smile and get to know one another," says Father David. "We want Coronavirus Angels to continue to do this work well into the future."

Coronavirus Angels work seven days a week (including bank holidays). Volunteers can help with shopping, prescription collection, and provide a listening ear and a befriending service.

*David Britten*

*St Mary's Church, Battersea*

*See back page for contact details*

## **Active Chats: new service from Age UK Wandsworth**

Faced with the pandemic, we set up an emergency food parcel service (we delivered more than 3,500 parcels) and expanded our telephone befriending scheme to ensure the lonely were receiving regular calls.

But as the pandemic continues and older people remain isolated, we know that physical activity, which is so important for wellbeing, is becoming an issue. While there are a number of exercise resources available online, many older people don't have internet access or digital confidence. That's where Active Chats comes in.

Active Chats is a service that sees trained volunteers call older residents on a regular basis to **have a chat and run through a series of seated exercises**. "The exercises are delivered in a fun, friendly way" explains Emma Chisholm,

Community & Wellbeing Lead at Age UK Wandsworth. "It's not like telephone boot camp, but a way of providing accessible instructions for exercise to promote mobility and also to reduce social isolation at this difficult time."



One of our first service users, Joan, says of her Active Chats volunteer: "We have a good chat and he goes through the exercises with me, saying 'I'm doing them with you!' He makes a joke of it and we have a laugh. I used to get a lot of neck pain, but the exercises he's taught me have been great. I try and do them every day and it really has helped."

The exercises have been designed

by a qualified personal trainer and are all from a seated position to avoid the risk of falls.

We are receiving referrals from hospital discharge teams as well as occupational therapists, and people can also self-refer if they feel they would benefit from the service.

We have also received funding from NHS Wandsworth Community Grant Programme to offer a new service to encourage LGBTQ+ members of our community who are aged 50+ to engage in an Active Chat with a volunteer who also identifies as LGBTQ+.

*If you would like more details, please contact Emma Chisholm on 0208 877 8940 or emma.chisholm@ageukwandsworth.org.uk*

*Natalie de Silva  
CEO, Age UK Wandsworth*



# Regenerate-RISE: service goes on

Throughout the coronavirus crisis, Regenerate-RISE has provided a service across Wandsworth – and is planning to keep going until the crisis is over, or until we are able to reopen our centres in Battersea and Putney.

We do not know how long that will be and in the past 13 weeks we have provided 2,065 “supply bags”, 2,599 meals, 140 “activity kits”, 301 Expressions of Kindness, shopped 104 times and made 2,148 phone calls. We provide wool, a pattern and needles for people to make a sweater or scarf for a child in Romania and our activity kits are fun things to do while at home. You can telephone and ask for

any of the above either as a one-off or on a regular basis – **please ring Paul on 020 8780 9330.**



You can phone for an activity kit

We are grateful to the London Community Support Fund, Hillsong Church, Wandsworth Council, Dons Wimbledon, Sainsbury's, Waitrose and all the individual donations that have enabled us to provide support to people across Wandsworth during these very difficult days.

We are here to help in any way we can. We have also dedicated two trees outside the Platt Christian Centre to say “Thank You” to the keyworkers who care for older people and anyone is welcome to hang a “Thank You” on the tree, which at night are lit up.

Mo Smith

For more info, please email [mosmith@regenerate-rise.co.uk](mailto:mosmith@regenerate-rise.co.uk)

## Winston Gordon 1931-2019

Winston Gordon who died on 13 August 2019 was a member of Wandsworth Older People's Forum Committee and a Trustee from 2014. In his final years he acted as the representative of Hestia Age Activity Centre in Tooting.

Winston was born in Jamaica, attended school and college there and came to Britain soon after. He worked for the GPO which became British Telecom about the time he retired.

Winston was a stalwart supporter and worker for the Labour Party. He was a firm believer in his causes and expected everyone else would agree with him.

Winston often drove Tom Cox around, a former MP for Tooting,, for many years. Latterly Tom drove Winston when Winston's foot was troubling him. They were great friends. Winston was very upset when the priest who conducted Tom's funeral did not mention Tom's long service as an MP and he took it on himself to say something at the graveside.



In the last year or two of his life, he acquired a scooter and he went around on that, into St Andrew's Church where he was a regular attender and into the Anchor Church Centre for meetings of the Forum and the committee.

He would encourage others to attend and at the Forum meetings he was always ready to talk to others and welcome new people. He had a firm view that services for older people should be good and would say when they were not but also praise them when the worked well.

We shall miss him.

Lilias Gillies

*Apologies for the late publication of Winston's obituary, which has been delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic*

### Are you lonely and need to chat to someone?

**The Silver Line**  
Tel 0800 470 8090

**Age UK Call-in-Time befriending**  
Tel 020 8877 8940

**Coronavirus Angels**  
Tel 0739 485 6557

**Samartians**  
Tel 116 123

**Wandsworth Council  
Community Hub**  
Will direct you to the right place  
Tel 020 8871 6555

**WOPF Management Committee**  
Tony Tuck Chair  
Valerie Hamblen Vice Chair  
John Horrocks Vice Chair  
Lilias Gillies Hon Sec  
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