

PHAROS

A beacon of hope in the darkness

Newsletter of the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG)

Issue 96: November 2019

Website: www.rpcsg.org.uk

THE NOVEMBER MEETING

The Chairman Chris Addison welcomed all to the meeting including three new members. After some information on the Fire Safety procedure, Chris mentioned exercise sessions that are available to all members. Graham Cook then gave some information about the Christmas Social and said that cooking is done using vegetable oil so there is no issue for vegetarians. There is more information on this Social later in the newsletter.

The Chairman then introduced Kate Slater, who is a Macmillan Benefits Adviser. She described the range of benefits that are available to patients and carers, from which it soon became obvious that the system is very complex. Kate described the benefits and the eligibility criteria around them and the main points of Kate's talk were as follows:

There are no benefits specific to cancer patients - all benefits are related to how you are affected by your condition.

Statutory Sick Pay of £94.25 per week is available for 28 weeks to those aged over 66 and working. After the 28 weeks there is no sickness benefit if you are of State Pension age.

If you are working you could be entitled to Contractual Sick Pay, dependent upon your contract.

There is a range of means tested benefits for which Assessment will take into account all your income including that of a live-in partner and all savings and capital.

If both partners are aged 66 and over you may be entitled to Pension Credit, especially if Statutory Sick Pay has expired, and you may also be entitled to Council Tax Reduction.

In the case of a mixed age couple (one above age 66 and the other below age 66) if you are already getting Pension Credit you can continue to claim it. If you are not receiving Pension Credit and you need means-tested benefits, you can apply for Universal Credit.

Universal Credit is a means tested benefit and replaces income support, Jobseeker's Allowance and means-tested sickness benefit (Employment and Support Allowance), housing benefit and tax credits (legacy benefits). If you are already on legacy benefits do not apply for Universal Credit without getting advice first - you may be worse off.

Universal Credit can be applied for online by opening an account. Your partner will also need to open an account and the Job Centre will link the two accounts for you. You will be given a 'Work Coach' who administers your account - even if you can't work.

Two disability benefits are available - Attendance Allowance if over retirement age and Personal Independence Payment if you are of working age.

Attendance Allowance criteria are: Am I disabled by my condition? Has it been for at least 6 months? Do I find it difficult to look after myself, dressing, washing, moving around indoors etc? Do I need supervision?

Personal Independence Payment is for persons disabled for at least three months and expected to be so for at least nine more months. Criteria include: Is moving around difficult, slow, unsafe? Do I need rests? Do I find it difficult to look after myself – cooking, dressing, bathing etc. Do I need help (maybe clearing up after accidents?) or supervision?

Carer's Allowance is for a person looking after another person in receipt of disability benefit. Refer to the web site www.gov.uk/carers-allowance

A Blue Badge is possible for people who can hardly walk, are not safe to walk and have great difficulty walking.

The Macmillan Trust offer grants:

- Income £170 (single person) or £289 (couple) after housing costs (rent/mortgage + Council Tax) deducted
- Additional £85 allowed per child
- Savings – no more than £6000 (single person) or £8000 (couple).
- Grant – average £340-380 for Cancer-related cost

Kate then gave three examples of people in different circumstances and showed the benefits available in each case. Example 1 was interesting in that as well as other benefits, the person received Guarantee Pension Credit of £2.10 per week. Although a small sum it entitles the recipient to access other benefits such as help with travel costs, dental treatment and optical vouchers.

Kate then showed some slides giving information on who to contact for assistance or information and the ways of contacting the authorities. I have listed these below as they will be very useful for anyone wishing to follow up on anything:

- www.gov.uk – for all DWP benefits
- www.macmillan.org.uk 0808 808 0000
- Personal Independence Payment call: 0800 917 2222
- Attendance Allowance call: 0800 731 0122 for an application form
- Carer's Allowance: apply on-line or download an application form at <https://www.gov.uk/carers-allowance/how-to-claim>
- Pension Service - 0800 99 1234
- www.citizensadvice.org.uk (especially help with completing PIP2 form)
- www.entitledto.co.uk

Macmillan Benefits – your specialist nurse can refer you or you can refer yourself via Macmillan Information Centre at RBH on 0118 322 8700.

Kate was thanked for her informative presentation and was presented with a gift of appreciation.

Kate later offered her set of slides to anyone interested, and it would be a good idea to acquaint yourself of the details in advance of making any contact with any of the organisations that Kate listed. If any member would like to see a copy of Kate's powerpoint slides, please send an email to me and I will forward a copy to you by email.

THE DECEMBER MEETING - CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

The December meeting will be our annual Christmas Social. This is always a very popular and most enjoyable event, held in St Andrews Church Hall on the **6th December 2019**. We engage an external contractor Mange Bien who have provided us with an excellent service for many years at our social occasions. A two course buffet dinner and tea or coffee will be served during the evening which will include an enigmatic quiz and a raffle with fabulous prizes at the choice of the lucky winners.

Doors will be open at 6:30 p.m. with the meal being served from about 7:30 p.m. A complimentary drink upon arrival will be served (alcoholic and non-alcoholic options).

The Christmas Social is now fully booked and a waiting list is in place. If you would like to go onto the waiting list please get in touch with the Treasurer Roger at this email address: saroban@btinternet.com

I would like to remind all guests that the Christmas Social is a 'Bring Your Own Drinks' event to which you should **bring your own drinks whether alcoholic or not, for your own consumption.**

GROUP MEETING 3rd JANUARY 2020

The RPCSG will hold a group meeting as usual on the 3rd January 2020. There will be no guest speaker but the evening will be an opportunity to relax and chat to other members. It will be in St Andrews Church Hall from 6:30 p.m.

RPCSG WALKS

The December walk will be on **Tuesday 3rd December** and will be in Burnham Beeches which is about 1.5 miles north of the village of Britwell. It will be a picturesque walk of about four miles mostly along paved paths. It will include a visit to a famous 800 years old tree.

There is a sizeable car park in Burnham Beeches that is free on weekdays. There is a cafe and toilets about 80 yards after the car park where we will stop later for refreshments. We will start the walk at 10:30 a.m. at the cafe.

The car park is on Lord Mayor's Drive which is off Bedford Drive. The easiest approach to the car park is by travelling east along Hawthorn Lane which becomes Bedford Drive. Travelling north on Bedford Drive you will come to a crossroad at which you turn left into Lord Mayor's drive. The turn is signposted by a brown sign saying 'Burnham Beeches' pointing into Lord Mayor's Drive.

The car park postcode is SL2 3LB but is not precise and my satnav takes me beyond the turn to the car park. If you use this postcode travelling north, go carefully as you approach the destination and look for the brown sign on the left pointing to 'Burnham Beeches'.

You can find some information about the Burnham Beeches car park including a map by searching online for 'Burnham Beeches car park'.

If you have any queries about the walk please email me or call Richard Brown on 07973 662925.

PREVIOUS WALK.

The November walk on the 5th November was attended by seven members and was very enjoyable.

Photographs taken during the walk:



SAD NEWS OF ROGER WOTTON

I am very sad to report the passing of Roger Wotton. For many years Roger was the Chairman of 'Tackle' which is the campaign name of The National Federation of Prostate Cancer Support Groups. This is an organisation helping to set up and support local Prostate Cancer Support groups. Roger was a very active campaigner and has been a guest speaker at our group meetings. He will be very much missed by us all. I have copied below the words from an email from the current Chairman of Tackle dated 25 Nov 2019:

It is with the deepest regret and sadness that we announce the death of our friend Roger Wotton on Friday last week after a courageous fight against Prostate Cancer.

Roger was tireless in his commitment to the cause of prostate cancer awareness. He was a passionate advocate of the importance of the view of prostate cancer patients being heard and a strong campaigner for early diagnosis of prostate cancer. A full tribute will be published in the next edition of Prostate Matters.

We have lost a dear friend and we need to continue the fight for men against prostate cancer in memory of Roger.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Susan and his family at this sad time.

Best regards
Ken Mastris
Chairman



Steve Parkinson
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DISCLAIMER

This newsletter does not offer medical advice. Nothing contained in the newsletter is intended to constitute professional advice for medical diagnosis or treatment or to advocate or recommend the purchase of any product or use of any service or guarantee the credentials or appropriateness of any health care provider. Members are strongly advised to consult with an appropriate professional for specific advice tailored to their situation.

This newsletter may refer to named providers and their products or services, and such reference expresses no inference upon any aspect of any provider's business, services or products, and expresses no recommendation or preference for any such products or services.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

3rd DECEMBER 2019

This is the December walk in Burnham Beeches.

6th DECEMBER 2019

This is the Christmas Social event.

3rd JANUARY 2020

An informal group meeting (no guest speaker) and a great opportunity to chat with other members.