



Newsletter

The Fight for Our NHS



At the last SPAG meeting on 3 March, Mark Kewley from the Southwark NHS clinical commissioning group gave a very impressive account of current changes in the area which is responsible for 600,000 residents and which has a budget of £800m. It covers Kings College Hospital in the south and Guys and St. Thomas's in the north.

Mark is currently heading the Sustainability and

Transformation Group, an initiative designed to save money in the NHS. Locally this has become The Southwark Five Year Forward Plan.

Mark says the plan can be summed up as “developing local care so that it is more integrated, coordinated and so that it is financially sustainable now and for the future – in fact better services for local

people.”

There is a growth in demand for health care because people are getting older and sicker. One in five Londoners is living with one or more complex conditions. At the same time, improvements in technology often incur further costs, so there is a potential funding gap and need for efficiency.

The Clinical Commissioning Group has enquired among local people into how to improve services by getting various parts to work together more closely, including relationships between physical and mental health and working more closely with volunteer organisations.



Please join us in helping to build a better society for everyone.

Dates:	Event:	Location:
Tues 21 March 11.45	Southwark Pensioners Forum	Walworth Methodist Church, 54 Camberwell Rd, SE5 0EN
Wed 22 March 6.30	SPAG Lobby of Southwark Council	160 Tooley Street, SE1 2QH
Friday 6 April 10.00 for 10.30	SPAG Meeting on Housing	SPC, 305-307 Camberwell Rd, SE5 0HQ

On Saturday 4 March SPAG members joined in the demonstration for “Our NHS” (see picture overleaf). It has been reckoned that about a quarter of a million people joined in. We met John Gutteridge from Poole who had travelled up to London that morning, all by himself in his motorised wheelchair to join in the demo. Impressive, don’t you think?

The Bedroom Tax

Up and down the country, the effects of the bedroom tax continue to be felt by older people as they end up giving up the homes they love because there is no longer enough benefit to pay for it.

This problem is about to get worse as the government has confirmed that from April 2019, the maximum benefit (local housing allowance) available for social housing will be the same as the maximum amount for private rented housing.

In London, the Local Housing Allowance is set at levels that mean pensioners whose families have moved out can still afford to pay the rent even though they may be living in a property deemed to be too large for their needs. Some people would be happy to move to a smaller property but these are often only available in areas far from cherished friends and memories.

Elsewhere in the country, that will change as rents levels allowed in both sectors for benefit become the same. This means that old people who became social housing tenants after April 2016 may end up having no choice but to move, perhaps even outside their local area if there is nothing suitable close by, or face mounting debt.

What happens elsewhere in the country is often a trial for what may happen in London and the South East especially as downward pressure on rents reduces the cost.

SPAG believes that this is wrong and the promised protection for pensioners from the worst effects of the bedroom tax should continue to remain in place.

Come to our next meeting Friday 6th April to debate the issue and find out what is going on.