

Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum

Working together in the interests of people aged 50 plus
email comms@sdsaf.org.uk

Our Newsletters

These are our main method of communication between the membership, they are mainly written by Committee and Action Group members on input from you and cover a wide range of interests from Action Group reports to recipes and poems. They have evolved over time and will continue to change to reflect peoples' requests. We have managed to produce 4 issues a year and plan to continue with this, we send out about 300 copies by post and 900 by email plus copies to others e.g. our councillors. So please keep giving us your input. – After all, a Forum is for the exchange of information and ideas

Note from Chair

Greetings!

Although there seems to be much turmoil in our world and many may feel anxious and uncertain about the future, the beauty of springtime brings with it hope and reassurance that somehow all will be well.



We encourage you to get out and about, keep moving, look out for opportunities to socialise eg by joining a walking group or going to a tea dance or a U3A group or just inviting someone for a cuppa and maybe a slice of simnel cake.

You are warmly invited to our free coffee morning at Bat and Ball station on Thursday 21 March. Come and meet each other and tell us what concerns and pleases you about being a senior in our district. It's a new venue for us so we could welcome your support and feedback.

Wishing everyone in our district an **eggstraordinary** Easter filled with joy, renewal, and gratitude! And let us give all of our seniors a pat on the back for our wisdom, experience, and resilience which help to shape a better world for generations to come.

Gill and Eileen

The next events

We have arranged a meeting with Tom Tugendhat MP for Tonbridge & Malling at 12.10 on Friday March 15, at his offices. His constituency includes Edenbridge, Cowden/Hever, Leigh and Penshurst which are part of our area. From the next election this constituency will also include New Ash Green and Hartley. If you have any questions to ask Tom or would like to attend, please let us know- contact details are at the end of this newsletter.

A coffee morning has been planned for **Thursday March 21 at the Bat and Ball railway station** TN14 5AP from 10.00am until noon. Tea, coffee and nibbles will be provided free of charge and this event is open to the public and all age groups are welcome. So, drop in for a chin-wag, put the world to rights and chat with others, including some of the committee, review what we have been up to and help us plan for the future. You can best get to the station by footbridge from the community centre in Cramptons Road, where there is free parking. You can go straight to the station, but it's paid parking with some limited on-street parking.

We look forward to meeting as many of you who can make it to this event

What's happening with our buses

At this moment we are not aware of any changes to the services in our area, but some may happen if the operators find they cannot continue to make a route pay, even if it is subsidised.

KCC have to submit a 2024 revised bus service improvement plan (BSIP) by the 12TH of June to the Department for Transport (DfT) and also publish it on their website. This is most likely to be a restructured version of their 2021 submission, which was curtailed owing to the suspension of many services by Covid.

The DfT's 38-page guidance to local authorities and bus operators (para 56) states "Our goal is to get bus usage back to what it was before the pandemic. Then we want to increase patronage and raise buses' mode share. We can only do these things by ensuring that buses are an attractive alternative to the car for far more people." The guidance to KCC's for their submission is to provide: -

"Their bus vision, current offer to bus passengers, an improvements programme to 2024/25. Ambitions, performance monitoring and reporting." At this stage it is not envisaged as a bidding document for funding.

There are some good ideas in this document, but we don't see anything much happening soon. In our view we are never going to see the KCC aim of 2017 which was "To promote affordable, acceptable and connected travel for all to jobs, education, health and other services" ever being achieved. - We will report back when we see what KCC publish on their website.

The bottom line is – Use it or Lose it!!

Local Plan 2040

A summary report of the 5273 responses to the latest consultation are to be made to SDC's Development committee on March 26, these should include input from the Forum's committee which focus on housing for the elderly. Following this, SDC have to issue a revised submission called Reg 19- this is due out in the summer and we should be allowed to make final comments before it is submitted to the inspectorate for implementation from spring 2025.

All parties, Government, our MP and SDC have made an issue of protecting our 93% Green areas. We were, therefore disappointed that the long-awaited revised Government planning guidelines still retained the discredited 2014 based formula as a starting point for assessing housing need, particularly as Michael Gove had pledged to review this. We have campaigned via our MP to have an allowance for Green credentials built into any formula for assessing local housing need. This means SDC have to demonstrate that they have done their best to plan for 712 new homes a year between 2015-40- a total of 10,680 an increase of 21%. KCC forecast that this would be for a 15.7% increase in population- 90% of this is forecast as net inward migration into the District, which is not mentioned in the plan.

SDC in their Plan 2040 (page48) indicate that they can only find suitable sites for 8,500 without infringing onto Green Belt, but could meet the Government ideal by building on brownfield/previously developed, or controversial Green sites such as Pedham Place, although concentrating development in one area should enable suitable infrastructure to be emplaced.

An opportunity to try indoor bowls

Some of you will have visited the Indoor Bowls Club in Hollybush Close having held your AGM here last year, so you will have seen what we are about. But have you thought about giving bowling a try? The Club and The Forum have a very similar age demographic. Our membership has an average age in the early to mid-70's and we have members in their 90's still playing regularly in competitive matches against other clubs, with the oldest recently celebrating his 96th birthday.

Your recent newsletters have had articles on the importance of physical and mental wellbeing and bowls can play an important role in maintaining those.

Staying physically active brings with it significant health benefits particularly with older people. Without physical activity, muscle mass can reduce by 50% in 80-year-olds. Bowling reduces the loss of muscle mass and improves vascular health reducing cardiovascular disease in older adults. Also, bowls helps maintain and even improve functional ability such as stability, mobility, and confidence in physical capabilities. Research has shown that physical activity can improve cognitive health and have a beneficial impact on mood, social relationships, and enjoyment. So, the physical health benefits that bowling provides are really important.

But the bowls club is not just about physical health. Our members value the Club for the social interaction it provides, enjoying the company of others in a relaxed and friendly environment. Regular social events are held including lunches, dinners, quizzes and even the odd Barn Dance. Members can play in roll ups – relaxed games of mixed teams, or for the more competitive in internal leagues or matches against other Kent Clubs.

The Club welcomes those with a physical disability. The Club has good disabled facilities including two bowls wheelchairs, a range of walking sticks and lifters, a wheelchair lift from the lounge to the rink, an access ramp from the car park and 8 car park spaces for the disabled. Bowlers with a disability can compete with or against non-disabled bowlers in most situations. We have a local Parkinsons Society as regular weekly bowlers and users of the Clubs' other facilities. Over the past year we have hosted an MS group, and a group of Chelsea Pensioners had an enjoyable day out at the Club.

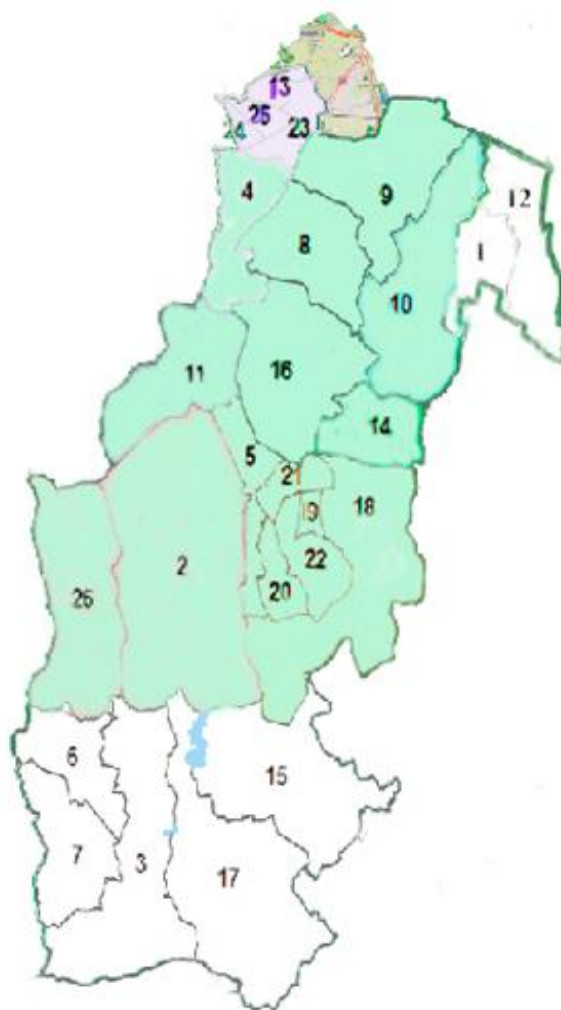
To further the relationship between our two organisations we are organising an afternoon of bowling for Forum members on Wednesday 10th April starting at 2.30 followed by drinks and something to eat. You need to allow at least 2 hours. No special equipment is required other than a pair of flat shoes and there will be no charge.

We would be delighted to see you on the day and if you are interested, please register your interest by email to comms@sdsaf.org.uk or telephone me, John Roberts from the club on 01732 453593.

The SDC Area and the Sevenoaks Parliamentary Constituency

Most of the constituency lies within the SDC boundaries. However, parts of SDC are in the Tonbridge constituency and there will be some changes from the next General Election, these have been included below: -

WARD NUMBER	Wards in Sevenoaks Constituency
2	BRASTED/CHEVENING/SUNDRIDGE
4	CROCKENHILL/WEST HILL
5	DUNTON GREEN/RIVERHEAD
8	EYNSFORD
9	FARNINGAM
10	FAWKHAM/WEST KINGSDOWN
11	HALSTEAD/KNOCKHOLT/BADGERS MOUNT
13	HEXTABLE
14	KEMSING
16	OTFORD/SHOREHAM
18	SEAL/WEALD
19	SEVENOAKS-EASTERN
20	SEVENOAKS-KIPPINGDON
21	SEVENOAKS-NORTHERN
22	SEVENOAKS TOWN/ST. JOHNS
23	SWANLEY CHRISTCHURCH&VILLAGE
24	SWANLEY ST.MARY'S
25	SWANLEY WHITE OAK
26	WESTERHAM& CROCKHAM HILL



WARD No.	Wards in Tonbridge Constituency
1	ASH & NEW ASH GREEN
3	COWDEN/HEVER
6	EDENBRIDGE N&E
7	EDENBRIDGE S&W
12	HARTLEY/HODSOLL STREET
15	LEIGH/CHIDDINGSTONE CAUSEWAY
17	PENSHURST/FORDCOMBE/CHIDDINGSTONE

In addition, the ward of Willington/Sutton at Home/Hawley which is in, and will remain in, the Dartford Borough Council Area has now been included as part of the Sevenoaks Constituency

Report from the Forums Crime Action Group

Hello everyone, it's a chance to go over the crime scene again. Although the Government is sponsoring an information campaign at the moment, it's good to have something in print to refer to. It is a concern that what is going on seems very negative and potentially frightening in many respects, but it is really important to keep on your toes.

I am constantly reviewing the police information that comes out via the Neighbourhood Alert news feed, I have put a link in at the end of this section. The article content below is largely taken from Santander Bank's advice to customers, but it is fully relatable to everyone and it is great to see an organisation providing so much information.

Having operated my computers consistently as a business tool for many years, I have always had software installed to protect me. You can get free programmes for computers and for your Smartphones. My main security programme is from McAfee and I have just started to read up on their warnings on the use of Artificial Intelligence and how that can be used to clone your voice. I propose to include that in part of the next newsletter when I have digested it all.

In the meantime, two of us have joined the Sevenoaks District Independent Police Advisory Board and will be making our specific concerns heard and taken forward. There is a forthcoming meeting with MP Tom Tugendhat on March 15 when various points relating to the crime scene from our perspective will be raised. He holds the Government post of Minister of State – Home Office – Security. To end, on Feb 14th I had a conversation with the Chief Constable in the Kent police HQ in Maidstone where I raised key issues of ours. We will have to wait and see if these actions are fruitful but the task continues.

Take care and stay aware.

Roger House

How they try to trick you and steal from you

1. They will say your account is at risk and your money needs to be moved to a new account to keep it safe.
2. You will be encouraged to act quickly and often told to lie to any genuine bank staff you might speak to.
3. They will come up with reasons why the account you are sending to has a different name to your own
4. They may direct you to what seems to be your bank's website to verify the number they seem to be calling from. They can make it look as if they are calling from a genuine number – it's called 'spoofing'.

How can you protect yourself?

1. **Your bank will never ask you to move money to a new account for security reasons.** If this happens it will be a scam.
2. **A genuine organisation will never rush you (or nag you) into taking action.**
3. **HANG UP and call your bank. Do it from a different phone as the criminal may have not released the line – yes they can do that. Get your bank number from their website, the reverse of your bank card or any banking documents.** You can also use 159 which will allow you to be put through to your bank safely.

- A genuine organisation won't rush you in to taking action. Take time to double-check what you're being asked to do before moving your money. You can use a publicly available phone number.
- Always be honest with the reason for your payment. This is so we can help protect you.

For more information visit "spotting fraud and scams" on our website. Or visit "Take Five", a national campaign offering impartial straight-forward advice.

Fake delivery company messages

Many of us receive deliveries at home and criminals use this as a way to steal your money. They might send you a fake message or email pretending to be a delivery company. They might say that you have missed a delivery and need to reschedule. The message will have a link and will ask for information such as your name, address and card details. (Surely they would know all they need and just want a different time slot – but why, they normally try to leave parcels with a neighbour or drop them on your doorstep – **STOP and THINK**).

If you click the link it could take you to a fake web site and then they may ask for a fee for redelivery. **STOP – THINK**, asking for a fee - this should not happen, contact the retailer you ordered from at the very least. **DO NOT GIVE ANY PERSONAL DETAILS.**

Keep yourself safe

Don't click on a link in a text or email and enter any of your personal information.

Never take things at face value. Criminals pretend to be people you trust. Always make sure you really know who you're talking to.

Beware of 'follow-on' scams

Over 17,000 people a year fall victim to a second fraud or scam after the first one.

Criminals use the information shared through previous scams – like name, address and card details. They do this to make you believe they're real.

There's been a spate of these linked to purchases made through fake Wilko social media adverts, but information can come from other sources.

Criminals may pretend to be a bank or the police. There are a few different things they might ask you to do.

This includes:

- Asking you to move your money to keep it safe.
- Asking you to withdraw cash or buy goods. Then hand these over to someone to assist with an investigation.
- Telling you they can help you get back money lost to fraud.

Criminals can make their calls, emails or texts look like they are from someone else, like your bank.

They can make a fake text appear next to other genuine texts. Call back using a phone number you know is genuine, like one on their website.

- Never move money out of your account for security reasons. Criminals may say that your account is at risk and to keep your money safe you need to move it to a new account. If this happens, it's always a scam.

- A genuine organisation won't rush you in to taking action. Take time to double-check what you're being asked to do before moving your money. You can use a publicly available phone number.
- Always be honest with the reason for your payment. This is so we can help protect you.

For more information visit "spotting fraud and scams" on our website. Or visit "Take Five", a national campaign offering impartial straight-forward advice.

HMRC SCAMS – the tax man cometh but NOT over the phone or email or text.

Even as retired seniors we may be susceptible to this form of scam, especially if they are suggested that you are due a back payment or any other reason whatsoever.

These fake emails will try to grab your attention with urgent language or 'too good to be true' offers.

The hooks criminals use will vary, but here are some of the common ones:

- tax credit renewals deadline:- 31/07/23.
- update your records
- a £460 discount offer under the Energy Bill Support Scheme, but you need to add your card details.

Each email will ask you to click on a link and fill in your personal and financial details. The scammers will use time sensitive scenarios in their emails to make you enter your personal details without thinking.

Just remember:

- HMRC will never send emails about rebates or refunds
- Never click on a link in an unexpected email and enter your details
- You should always contact HMRC to verify any payment request using the number on the gov.uk website or through your online tax account.

ScamSmart tool from the FCA

Use the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) ScamSmart tool: (<https://www.fca.org.uk/scamsmart>) to check if your investment is a scam or not.

All you need to do is answer 4 easy questions and you'll get information on the potential investment and any possible risks. The tool will tell you if the company you're planning to invest with is regulated by the FCA or if there's a risk that it's a clone company.

It's always a good idea to take the time and carry out extra checks on a company before investing. For example, check that the telephone numbers you've been given match those registered to the company so you can contact them directly using the genuine number.

Take a look at Santander's information page spotting fraud and scams page:

<https://www.santander.co.uk/personal/support/fraud-and-security/spotting-fraud-or-scams> for more information and our tips to protect yourself.

NEIGHBOURHOOD ALERT

For regular news on community issues including fraud, scams and other criminal activities in the area, the Kent Police support this web site. You can register and receive regular alerts as to what is happening around you. <https://www.neighbourhoodalert.co.uk/>

Praise

Kemsing Motors - efficient and humane service after a member's car was damaged by potholes

Paul - at Boots opticians in Sevenoaks for going above and beyond what is normally expected in terms of customer care

Voluntary hospitality in Sevenoaks District - a tribute to all those who serve coffee, refreshments and meals to others in our very hospitable district

Good Things Foundation and data bank for helping people in need to connect with their nearest and dearest

Rail service staff who help people with disabilities on journeys throughout UK

Chris Towers, SDSAF Treasurer, for challenging us to solve a murder mystery acted by the Imperial Players

Tom Tugendhat MP, Minister for Security, for launching 'Stop Think Fraud' campaign to cut down on scam crime

Carole Jenkins who runs the Thursday Cameo (Come And Meet Each Other) Group at the Eden Centre in Edenbridge

All those involved with our Citizens Advice Bureaux, currently under threat of cost cuts, who give an excellent service to those in need

Free, Seated Exercise Class - Riverhead Village Hall - Mondays 3.30

We know how important it is to keep active. If you can get to Riverhead Village Hall, why not try this free of charge exercise class. It's good fun, facilitated by Rosie who keeps an eye on everyone and is encouraging and nurturing.



The session closes with a nice chat over a cuppa. Tell your friends. For more information email everystepcounts17@gmail.com or call Irene Collins 07899 985196

Come Dancing!

A letter from Andrew Watts encouraging us to try the mid-week Tea Dance at Bat and Ball Centre, Sevenoaks.TN14 5DN.

He told us :

'Walking, running, swimming and dancing are always quoted as good exercise. The first 3 are good, of course, but can be lone pursuits, whereas dancing is first a social and then an active form of exercise.'

It does not matter what kind of dance is involved, ballroom, Latin, line, sequence, Scottish or disco. You will very soon be made welcome and involved. And you don't need to bring a partner. You meet others, talk, share a drink, maybe a cake and time together. It's good for everyone.

Even if you don't dance a step, go to listen to the music then more will happen, it is up to you. I am biased but I feel this is the best for all. Social is sometimes more important than exercise. Give it a go even if you have no partner. You won't regret it!

14.30-16.30, £4 - pay on the door.

Usually every Wednesday afternoon, except that it takes place on Tuesdays on, the following dates in 2024 -

Tuesday 27 Feb, 26 Mar, 23 April, 21 May, 25 June, 24 Sep, 22 Oct, 26 Nov

Meeting with Laura Trott



A group of Forum members met with Laura Trott MP in January. Our Forum is independent of any political party and aims to be a voice for all Seniors. We submitted a range of questions covering Health, Social Care, Transport, Housing, Accessibility Standards, Government funding, Scams, Digital exclusion and increased mortality. There were too many issues to cover in the allotted time and Laura Trott has sent detailed written responses to the remaining questions. We will be glad to send these to any members on request. Thank you to all who participated.

Here is Laura Trott's account of our meeting as seen in her recent newsletter

'It was great to catch up with the wonderful Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum (SDSAF). For those of you who do not know, the group which now has over 1,200 members, represents those in the District who aged 50 and over, and ensures their voice is heard on a range of both local and national issues. For example, we discussed the pension triple lock, access to local GP services, and support for carers. It is vital that we look after our most vulnerable members of the community. This is why I was delighted to protect the State Pension Triple Lock while Pensions Minister, why I obtained a banking facility within the post office in Swanley, and why I continue to campaign for a full Banking Hub there following the closure of many high street banks. If you would like to get involved with the Senior Action Forum, their website (<https://www.sdsaf.org.uk/>) is both a brilliant source of information on topics such as mental health, cybercrime and social events, as well as details on how to volunteer and get involved. The group do fantastic work so if you are interested, it is well worth a visit.'

We appreciate these encouraging words and the opportunity to air our concerns. Note that we will be meeting with Tom Tugendhat MP on Friday 15 March at 12.10 in Tonbridge. Please send in any questions you would like him to address and do contact us if you would like to attend.

If you would like to read the full response from Laura Trott to our questions, they will be available on our website at: www.sdsaf.org.uk. Or by request to our email or postal address- details at the end of this newsletter

Caught in the Glare - driving in the dark

Lynne Payette, our friend in California, has kindly contributed these thoughts for those seniors who need to drive at night.

Half of all fatal crashes happen after dark even though only 25% of driving happens at that time; possibly because drivers may forget to wear their seatbelts, may be under the influence of alcohol or more prone to feel drowsy.

When we age, our ability to see in the dark often deteriorates especially if we are starting to develop macular degeneration or cataracts. We become less sensitive to changes in contrast and less able to distinguish pedestrians or road markings. Also, our reaction times may reduce and it becomes difficult to see how fast other cars are moving. All of this may happen very gradually without us noticing. The old-fashioned remedy of eating carrots may help but won't be sufficient. It is important to have regular eye check-ups with an optician to ensure our own safety and the safety of others.

Happily, modern headlights are getting better at lighting up the roads. To avoid hazards, it is a good idea to use your headlights at night whenever you can, except when there are oncoming cars.

When buying a new or used car, look for models with top rated headlights or consider getting your headlights and casings replaced.

Remember to keep your windscreen, headlights and spectacles clean, for obvious reasons

Try resetting the illumination levels on your dashboard to low so you can see outside without distraction

Remember to avoid alcohol and to wear your seatbelt and maybe have a strong coffee before driving out at night to avoid feeling drowsy - it may interrupt your sleep but will help to keep you alert and safe.

Healthwatch Kent Survey

Healthwatch Kent is conducting a survey to find out what people (55 and over) feel has the biggest impact on their health and wellbeing. The responses will help to shape the health and social services available to the older people in Kent. The survey takes **less than 5 mins**. If you would like to take part, the survey link is <https://portal.ek360.co.uk/over-55s-health-wellbeing> or email emmanuel@healthwatchkent.co.uk or call one of us at the Forum (see end of this newsletter) and we will arrange to get a hard copy of the document sent to you.

Recipe

Tasty red peppers

Delicious as a starter or light lunch. Chosen as a source of vitamins B6, B12, C, E, folate and polyphenols.

- 1 red pepper
- 1 tomato
- 2 canned anchovy fillets, drained and chopped
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- A few torn Basil leaves
- Freshly ground black pepper



Preheat oven to 180 degrees C / gas mark 4

(or save fuel and use air fryer)

Cut pepper in two halves and remove seeds. Arrange cut side upwards on lightly greased baking dish.

Skin the tomato (plunge into boiling water for a few seconds to make this easier) cut into quarters and put two pieces into each half pepper.

Distribute garlic and anchovy fillets over tomatoes, drizzle with olive oil and season with pepper.

Bake uncovered for approx. 30 minutes. Scatter over the basil leaves and serve with fresh bread to soak up the juices.

Physician Associates

We are all aware that there is a shortage of Doctors in the NHS particularly of GPs in Primary Care. To mitigate this problem many surgeries are employing Physician Associates (PAs) to work as part of a multidisciplinary team. However, NHS research has found that the general public are often confused over the roles and responsibilities of Physician Associates and 57% of patients have not heard of them at all.

Physician associates are healthcare professionals with a generalist medical education who work alongside doctors and surgeons providing medical care. They work under the supervision of a named doctor such as a GP or hospital consultant. They work autonomously but with appropriate support from their clinical supervisors. Thus, they are able to work independently and make independent decisions, having direct contact with patients.

Physician Associates need an undergraduate degree in a life science subject such as biochemistry or medical sciences. After that Physician Associate training lasts for 2 years with students studying for 46-48 weeks of the year.

PAs can take patient histories, conduct physical examinations, request and interpret investigations, diagnose and manage patients, make referrals and order out-patient appointments. They can admit and discharge patients. In a GP surgery, PAs may see patients of all ages for acute and chronic medical care where clinically appropriate. They can also make home visits. PAs can refer patients to Consultants, the acute medical unit or the emergency department. However, as yet they are an unregulated profession, they cannot prescribe medication or order radiological examinations. PAs can practise independently and make independent decisions but they have a collaborative and supportive working relationship with their clinical supervisors.

There is a register for Physician Associates but as yet it is not compulsory for them to register. However, it is advised that surgeries who are employing physician associates take them from the register. Registration will be mandatory by the end of 2024 when the General Medical Council will set standards of practice, education and training, and operate fitness-to-practise procedures, ensuring that PAs have the same levels of regulatory oversight and accountability as doctors and other regulated healthcare professionals. These regulations should be in force by the end of 2024.

Physician associates should introduce themselves to patients as such to avoid confusion with Doctors. Patients should know who they are seeing and what role that person holds. If in doubt then ask. It has been recommended that patients should not see a physician associate twice for the same condition. If they need further treatment or advice, they should be referred to a Doctor.

Anna Chaplains

The network of Anna Chaplains offers spiritual care in later life, in a wide range of contexts. They accompany older people in reflecting on their life and their relationship with God, breaking down generational barriers and offering friendship and community. Anna Chaplains are named after the widow, Anna, who appears with Simeon in Luke's gospel; both are good role models of faithful older people. Anna Chaplains are there for people of strong, little or no faith at all.

<https://www.annachaplaincy.org.uk/about-anna-chaplaincy>

FORUM CONTACT DETAILS

To contact the Forum Committee:- email Eileen Murray-Giles at :
chair@sdsaf.org.uk, or write to
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Please let us know if you would like to receive the Newsletter in large print and an audio version
can also be made available