

**MINUTES**

**WOODHILL PATIENTS GROUP MEETING**

**MAYFIELD CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**THURSDAY, 15th OCTOBER 2015, 7.30PM**

Committee members present: John Gaunt (Chair), Bill Dixson (Vice Chair/Treasurer), Jeanette Hore (Secretary), David Miles (Training)

JG apologised for the poor turnout of six additional people in the audience despite ample advance notification and promotion for this meeting and the perceived relevance of this subject to many in our community.

JG Welcomed the guest speakers from ‘Carer for the Carers’, Mark Tolhurst & Laura Rickaby, who gave a slide presentation and discussion session on the topic of unpaid carers.

An unpaid carer is someone who provides free care and support to a family member, friend or neighbour who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems.

Our speakers presented us with an overview of this issue from the UK perspective as well as in relation to East Sussex.

They supplied a few facts and figures:

* Unpaid carers are now saving the UK £87 billion every year in potential care costs, which amounts to more than the government's total spend on the NHS in the last financial year.
* On average, every carer looking after an ill or disabled relative saves the national economy £15,260 per year.
* Three in five people will end up caring for someone at some point in their lives
* By 2035, 50% more people will be carers – 9 million in the UK
* There were 59,409 carers in East Sussex (Census 2011).

The actual number of carers remains unknown as many do not identify themselves and therefore do not receive the help and support available to them. Carers remain hidden for a variety of reasons, but predominately because they don’t perceive themselves to be carers or wish to be labelled as a carer and simply see their caring role as their duty.

Caring for someone long term can have a serious impact on the person providing the care:

* Loss of identity and poor self-esteem
* No breaks or time off
* Physical health problems, particularly problems with bad backs
* Stress, anxiety and depression
* Relationship difficulties with the person they care for and other family members or friends
* Isolation and loneliness
* Financial problems and debt.

Perhaps carers should also ask themselves what would happen if they became incapable of carrying out their caring role?

It was noted that each GP practice has a protocol for the identification of carers and it is important that you let your GP know if you are fulfilling a caring role so that they can advise and refer you to the appropriate services if required.

JG thanked our speakers on behalf of those present for their time and the excellent information that they had provided.

JG stated that Woodhill Patients Group have been consulting with ‘Care for the Carers’ with a view to setting up a regular clinic here in Mayfield that would provide free support and advice from professionals and peers. Unfortunately, despite promotion of this initiative via Yellow Pages, posters and emails to our members, we have received no feedback from our community indicating any level of interest and this was further illustrated in that only 6 people turned up for this meeting.

JG stated that the WPG still believe that many individuals in our communities would benefit from such a service. Therefore, we will look for other options to engage our community on this subject.

It was noted that even if you are not in a caring role at present you are likely to be called upon at some stage, perhaps at short notice, or you may know of someone who is struggling and needs help.

Our AGM was scheduled to follow on after the presentation but due to the lack of attendees we could not constitute a quorum. It was therefore decided to hold a further meeting in the New Year. In the meantime the current committee members agreed to continue in their respective roles.

JG gave a brief overview and status of the three defibrillators obtained by WPG. An email was sent out in August to several clubs and groups in Mayfield & Five Ashes offering a free demo. To date only one request has been received.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.

Future Meetings:-

Friday 29th April 2016; 7.30pm Mayfield Primary School to include rescheduled AGM