

**Community Nurses : what would we do without them ?
Talk at the AGM of Headley Voluntary Care**

Alison Sutton, Head of our local Community Care Team (CCT), was the guest speaker at the AGM of Headley Voluntary Care on 14 March. We all hope we will not develop long term illnesses as we get older, nor even just acquire the afflictions which seem to come with old age ; but if we do, it is reassuring to know that Alison and her team are there for us in our hours of need, determined and able to give us first class palliative care , and whenever possible to allow us to stay in the comfortable surroundings of our own homes. The Chase hospital is excellent , but it has limited beds available...only eight... and no matter how good the care, nothing beats being at home with easy access for relatives and neighbours. The 'Virtual Ward' scheme takes the pressure off the hospital ward, and ensures good treatment for patients at home.

The CCT organisation consists of the senior community matron, administrators, physiotherapists, occupational therapists , and , of course, the community nurses themselves. They act as a team to provide integrated and multidisciplinary care to patients explaining the treatment options which are available to them and advising how treatment is progressing. The CCT also links to specialist staff, such as heart failure nurses, the hospitals, the ambulance service, GP practice nurses, adult services such as social workers, and voluntary care services including Headley Voluntary Care. Alison stressed how pleased the CCT is that HVC is there and able to help with patients' transport needs and visiting services.

Where the CCT plays a particularly key role is in palliative care, for those with long term illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, cancer, and motor neurone disease. In effect, the nurses become friends of such patients and are with them as symptoms develop and treatment options are considered. Similarly, the team supports those nearing the end of their lives and provides a range of services to reduce anxiety and enable patients to achieve a dignified and peaceful death.

Alison's talk was well received at the AGM , and all in the hall showed their appreciation of her and the service her team give to our community.

The HVC Chairman, John Evans, and members of his committee, commented on the continued success of the charity in meeting the needs of the community especially in respect of the provision of transport for clients attending medical appointments. For reasons yet unexplained, the number of drives requested fell by over ten percent in the 2011/2012 year. Posters advertising the charity were made available to those attending the meeting, and they were asked to promote the service at every opportunity.

The HVC Spring meeting takes place on Thursday 9 May at 8 o'clock in the Church Hall when the speaker will be Pauline Fitter BEM who heads the Haslemere branch of the Chernobyl Children Life Line Charity. She will talk about the children who still suffer major body and mental damage from the nuclear power station explosion in 1986, and what her charity does to ease their suffering. All are urged to attend, and to bring with them any school useful items such as pens and pencils, biros and notebooks; Pauline will ensure all will reach the children and support their educational development.

Peter Marsh : Publicity : Headley Voluntary Care