

Slough Senior Citizens Group  
January 2006-January 2016 and beyond

**INTRO:**

Looking to its future, Celebrating its past

A story of fresh air, goodwill of friends and faith in future

**A continuing effort to understand:**

Known knowns

Known unknowns

Unknown unknowns

**Activities & Events**

Special Programmes

**Awards**

**Thank You's**

EC & Chair

NHS

SCVS

BCF & People's Health Trust

Volunteers and Instructors

**Our Vision**

**Our Inspiration**

Vijaya Gupta

13.07.2016

Thank you Jesal for your words of welcome for all our guests to which I add my own.

Today I have a challenge to meet: To tell you the story of Slough Seniors of its 10 year journey in 10 minutes or preferably less.

It was the idea of Mr Mewa Mann, presently our Chair, that Slough needed a group where its elderly people could meet in easy informality, with focus on health issues, organise workshops, annual trips and events for respite and relaxation. With some preliminary work the constitution was developed and the Executive Committee was formed and the Group was launched on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2006.

I am happy to say that a number of members of the group, present in 2006 are here today as well.

To help me explain our ten year journey I am using the expression **known knowns, known unknowns and unknown unknowns** used by former US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in the context of the Iraq war.

Throughout our journey of 10 years we have seen good days and bad days. Known Knowns: that a group for senior citizens was the need of the hour, this was a known known. The group has survived for ten years and presently, when the services for the elderly in Slough are being severely curtailed; the issues of loneliness and isolation need to be urgently addressed, shows that such community groups are needed even more.

Known Unknowns: In one of the workshops the attendees were asked: what makes community groups survive? One of the replies was, infrastructure. Another said, funding. I said: fresh air, goodwill of friends and faith in future.

Those were the days when, as Robert Browning had said: God's in His Heaven, All's right with the world. In April 2011, when we were left with only £400 as our bank balance, we learnt that "fresh air, goodwill of friends and faith in future" does not always translate into funds. As always our friends from BCF helped us through. We realised that **we did not fix the roof when sun was shining!**

Unknown Unknowns: How to meet the challenge of funding is still one of the unknown unknowns for us. Partly because we thought making successful funding applications is an art and difficult to acquire for people like us. Under the circumstances we continue to hope that one day we will be able to break the secret code of the unknown unknowns.

## **Activities and Events**

Over the last 10 years we have pursued Healthy Living for Senior Citizens. Our workshops and seminars on health related subjects have proved quite popular.

We have been able to develop a number of regular activities: two exercise sessions per week, subsidised lunches, annual seaside trips and open days.

We organised visits to the House of Commons, day trips to Bournemouth, Bath, Margate, Eastbourne and Wittering. Trips to Berry Island and Clacton-On-Sea were also well received. Recently our trip to Eastbourne was exceptionally successful. As the group progressed activities have been shaped around the members needs and requirements.

Special programmes: Slough Seniors pioneered several programmes including International Older People's Day in 2014, Falls Awareness workshops for 5 weeks during July 2015 and International Yoga Day this year. These were organised in Slough for the first time.

The group has also been organising charity activities by raising donations in cash and in-kind for Slough Foodbank and Diabetes UK since 2013 because we believe community groups should also contribute to the welfare of the local community.

### **Awards- an opportunity to improve, bettering the best**

Slough Seniors has been exceptionally fortunate that it has received peer recognition in ample measure. **The Group of the Year Award** in 2013 was very uplifting in our 10 year journey. We got several other awards as well, a few in my name. My reflection on such occasions has been: all these awards are a recognition of the work we are doing **as a group** rather than personal to me. I feel that awards should be an opportunity for bettering the best, rather than self glorification.

### **Thank you**

We wish to place on record our gratitude to the institutions and individuals for their continuous support:

#### Members, EC members and Chair of Slough Seniors

I have received total support all through 10 years from the EC members and our respective Chairs. They have worked beyond the call of duty whatever the occasion. My grateful thanks to them.

NHS Professionals: for a community group geared towards health issues it has been heartening to receive continuous support from them. They readily agreed to find time for us when ever we approached them. Now we understand why **NHS is the darling of the people.** Some of the presentations remembered by our members have been: Prevention of Stroke, and Healthy Ageing by Dr Bhaskar Mandal; Diabetes and Healthy Eating by Dr Kesar Sadhra; Move More and Eat Less by Dr Jim O'Donnell. I am glad that Dr O'Donnell and Dr Sadhra are here in this celebration event.

SCVS: Over the years the assistance and guidance received from SCVS has been consistent. On this occasion I would say: SCVS has been **an ideal, friend philosopher and guide.** SCVS as an institution and its senior staff have helped the group at a high professional level.

SS have enjoyed the hospitality of the columns of Newline edited by Lorna and received her assistance in bringing out our publications and organising this event. The level of support from Jesal has been no less then remarkable, it has been innovative and enthusiastic. At the same time Ramesh has extended his guidance to the group all through. We welcome his new role as **happiness guru,** which I am sure will be uplifting!

BCF and People's Health Trust: Thank you to the two institutions which have given funding support over the years: their are present here today.

Press: The press helped us to spread the word of what we do. As a former Professor of Media studies, I consider journalists as members of my extended family.

Instructors and Volunteers: They are the unnamed persons doing precious work for 50 weeks, twice a week. The group is what they make it to be.

Looking to its future, celebrating its past.

Slough Seniors as a group focuses on health. We wish to continue on the same path and contribute to **making Slough healthier**. This programme may include: How to prevent becoming unwell, self care management for the elderly and generally looking after yourself. I am confident that in this we shall have the support of Dr Jim O'Donnell, Dr Kesar Sadhra, the CCG. We wish to work closely with *Meri Sehat*, who are also making a precious contribution in this area.

We wish to continue our journey as a popular community group in the service of elderly people of Slough and we hope to add many more activities and programmes in the future.

## **Our Vision**

Our vision is summed up by: "Just living and being sick is the worst. The idea that you can have fewer diseases, a healthy life, and then say good bye", that is a good vision to have.

## **Our Inspiration**

Ulysses written by Lord Tennyson is one of my favourite poems. The legendary Greek hero addresses the mariners with whom he has worked with for many years. He encourages them to make use of old age, it is not too late to seek a newer world. Slough Seniors is the embodiment of that undying spirit!

*Old age had yet his  
honour and his toil...  
Some work of noble note,  
may yet be done...  
But strong in will  
To Strive, to seek, to find,  
and not to yield  
From Ulysses, a poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson*

Thank you.

I request that you all take time to have a look at our 10 year history on the display and in pictures. Your comments and impressions are most welcome and may be entered in the comment book