

PENSION BENEFIT AND HEALTHCARE TEAM

BENEFIT SPOTLIGHT – WINTER FUEL ALLOWANCE

Winter is approaching and, for some, this will mean an increase in heating bills and renewed discussion on Winter Fuel Allowance (WFA). Although the PBHT highlighted the issue of WFA this time last year, WFA is such an important topic for many residents here and, with the Government's Spending Review recently published, we thought it only right to revisit the topic.

The first important point to make is that WFA is not linked to your pension, nor to any tax you pay in the UK. The second is that it is only exportable to Spain if you have previously been eligible to receive it in the UK. This means you must have moved to Spain on or after 5th January 1998 and have been resident in the UK during a qualifying week in September at age 60 or above or from this year attained age 60 by 5th July 2010.

Despite much speculation, under the Government's recent Spending Review, there are no current changes to the rules on WFA. Should any changes be made in the future, we will be sure to update you. If you believe you are eligible for WFA, contact the International Pension Centre on 0044 191 218 7777. If you are not eligible for the benefit but are in need of assistance, contact social services at your local town hall.

HEALTHCARE NEWSFLASH

Invoicing at the Costa Del Sol Hospital in Malaga

As part of a pilot project by the Spanish Government, the Costa del Sol Hospital in Marbella has begun to issue customers with invoices for the treatment received. These are known as 'facturas sombras' and are to show customers how much their treatment has cost the health service. If you do receive an invoice following treatment, please do not panic! Providing you are adequately registered for healthcare in Spain, the "factura sombra" is for information only – you do not have to do anything. If the project is deemed a success, more hospitals throughout Spain could soon follow suit...

VOTING IN SPANISH ELECTIONS

Like you, we believe that registering to vote is important as it allows the voices of British nationals in Spain to be heard at a local level and is important in ensuring that local services take account of the needs of the British community. If you are resident in Spain and wish to vote in the Spanish municipal elections on 22nd May 2011, you must register to vote with your town hall before the end of the year. This means you must be registered on the padrón **and** have explicitly expressed a wish to vote in municipal elections by signing on the electoral roll (censo electoral). Once registered, you do not need to re-register.

If you are not yet on the padrón, visit your town hall to get registered. At the same time you can declare that you also wish to vote and get signed onto the electoral role (*Censo Electoral de Residentes Extranjeros*)

If you are registered on the padrón but not registered to vote, you should soon receive a letter from the Electoral Census Office. To confirm you wish to vote, sign the declaration and return it to the local office

If you are not sure if you are registered to vote, or whether your address is up to date on the padrón, contact your local town hall. Further information, in English, is available from http://www.residenteseuropcos.com/pdf/padron_en.pdf. Although this is written for residents in the Alicante Province, the information remains relevant to British citizens in other parts of Spain.



LIGHT A CHRISTMAS STAR

Why don't you light up someone's life this Christmas by making a donation of just €9 to provide a food hamper to those most in need.

The Age Concern España Casework Service helps thousands of older British nationals here in Spain to overcome poverty, combat isolation and assist with integration into Spanish life. Many people here in Spain are struggling to cope with daily life and are living below the poverty line. The Age Concern España Casework Service receives 4 new cases every week involving people who are in severe difficulties. This year alone the Casework Service has distributed over €130,000 in grants to their beneficiaries here in Spain and have delivered an unprecedented number of food parcels. For just €9 you can provide one week's worth of food for an elderly person in need.

You can make a direct donation to our bank account or by calling INFOLINE (902.003.838).

Banca March, Santanyi, Mallorca

Account: 00610038280087640110 - IBAN: ES5500610038280087640110

SWIFT: BMARES 2M

Concepto: Light a Star

GETTING OLDER IS A FACT OF LIFE. POVERTY AND ISOLATION DOES NOT HAVE TO BE.

GOOD NEWS STORIES

We recently received a letter from a lady in Alicante. Two casework volunteers undertook an assessment and we were able to source funds to purchase a mobility scooter for her. She told us that the scooter she has named "Nellie" has changed her life because now she can go out with her dog or go shopping on her own. She even wrote a little ditty for us:

**"There was an old girl on a scooter
With an engine that couldn't be muter
She cried 'What a lark'
As she rode through the park
Scatt'ring dogs 'n kids with the hooter
You have changed my life."**

Another story involves a gentleman in Northern Spain. The British Consulate referred the case to the Age Concern España Casework Service. He had no-where to live and had to regularly beg on the street to get money for food. Unfortunately, we did not have any volunteers in the area but a Consular Officer kindly helped by completing an assessment for us. We were then able to source funding from a number of UK charities which meant that the gentleman was able to pay rent for a flat and have enough funds to buy food and essentials. By working in partnership we were able to make a significant difference and transform this gentleman's life.



COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES

The June edition of the newsletter included an article on the Commonwealth War Graves in Spain which come under the care of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The Commission has 54 commitments throughout Spain and are looking for volunteers to monitor the graves. The Commission is extremely grateful to those who have contacted them already with offers of help but are still looking for volunteers in the following areas:

Cervera, Barcelona, Palma, Madrid, Mataró, Peña(Navarra), Tarragona, Pontevedra & Zahara de los Atunes (Barbate). If you would like to volunteer to help –please contact:

Consuela Luci, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Tel: 39 06 509991201, Fax:39 06 50524593.