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NEWSLETTER #5 JANUARY 2017

Welcome

Well, a year has passed since we started our newsletters and we are so pleased to note that we are getting tremendous feedback from clients. Thank you for letting us know that you are finding them informative and most importantly a good read!

Although a long time ago in our memories, 2016 was rounded off with those in the office taking part in Christmas Jumper Day in support of Save the Children. Some magnificent jumpers were wheeled out for their annual airing and we are pleased to report that £30.00 was raised for our efforts.

Even Lacey took part in the festivities and stole the show.



However, after the events of 2016 which included Brexit, Trump and many celebrity deaths we've been scouring the internet to see if there are any events we can look forward to.

Here are a few things we've found:-

- ◆ The 89th Academy Awards (The Oscars) take place on 26 February.
- ◆ The RHS Chelsea Flower Show will be held between 23 May and 27 May.
- ◆ The final of the America's Cup will be happening between 26 May and 27 June; here's hoping Sir Ben Ainslie can bring the cup home for Great Britain. The 163-year old trophy has never won by Great Britain.
- ◆ In June we hope to be successful again with an entry in to Guildford in Bloom.
- ◆ All eyes will be on Sir Andy Murray in July. Hopefully he will still be the tennis world number one as he steps on to Centre Court at Wimbledon in a bid to retain his 2016 title.
- ◆ The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh will celebrate their platinum wedding anniversary on 20 November.

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Christmas charity is not just for Christmas

During the season of good cheer surrounding Christmas, we're encouraged to think about those who are lonely and homeless.

There are drop in centres which provide a Christmas day lunch and some good cheer with transport home afterwards.

But what happens later? In the cold days of January and beyond? Those people are still lonely, some of them not speaking to another person for days. Are they warm enough? With enough food? If they take medication can they go out for them in a snowy period? And how do we know about them?

In these days when many work, leaving the house before it gets light and returning after dark, it is hard to get to know your neighbours, and with typically British reserve, many do not want to be seen to 'interfere'.

There are always the horror stories of people being found after some weeks or months so how can we prevent this 'in our own backyard'?

When there were milkmen, I would advise clients to take daily milk, so that, if it was not taken in, the milkman would alert the authorities, and I've known window-cleaners who have made gruesome discoveries as well. But we, as neighbours, can do our bit, with a little observation. If you know that someone living near you is alone, look out for tell-tale signs that there may be a problem.

Have the curtains been drawn?

Are lights going on and off?

Is there a different pattern of behaviour? Did your neighbour clean their step every week or put out rubbish, which hasn't happened this week?

If you do notice something different, what can you do? However reluctant you may be, ring the doorbell – I am sure the person would not mind if you asked them if they were OK. If there is no answer, perhaps talk to other neighbours who might know what has happened.

And if that does not satisfy you, call the police to tell them of your concerns.

There is help for people who are lonely, either with the practicalities of daily routine, or just for companionship. AgeUK Surrey, for instance, runs various activities from 'GO50' walks of different levels, to providing a counselling service for those who feel low. They also provide Help at Home, where you tell them what help you want. They even have a computer drop-in centre for older people who struggle with modern technology. This is particularly useful for those who have relatives abroad – one of the steps taught is how to email or even Skype relatives who live far away.

But it is not just the elderly who can be lonely. It can be a divorcee, a single child whose parents have died, or a widowed person struggling with being alone for the first time in many years.

So spare a thought for that neighbour who you hardly ever see, especially if they are elderly.

Jennifer

Carol Concert in the Guildford Cathedral – well, not quite!

We were very pleased to once again be one of the sponsors of AgeUK Surrey and Guildford Cathedral's carol concert on Tuesday 13 December.

What a wonderful morning, although not being able to be in the Cathedral this year due to the works being carried out, the concert was held in an extremely cozy marquee.

We were delightfully entertained by the Guildford Cathedral Singers together with a very professional choir from Rydes Hill Preparatory School. A perfect way to kick-start the festive mood!

AgeUK Surrey is in fact an independent charity from AgeUK and this is one of their important annual events to raise funds which help those in Surrey.



Let's talk about falls – an update

In October's newsletter I mentioned about a course on falls I had enrolled on and am pleased to provide an update as promised.

Falls are not a normal part of aging; that was the encouraging message I was given by the online course run by an organization called Futurelearn.

Using experts such as physiotherapists and nurses, the five week course explained why people fall, how falls can be prevented and what to do to help a person who has fallen.

Apparently over 10,000 people end up being treated for injuries caused by falls each year so it makes sense to try to prevent them.

If a person is prone to falls, it is sensible to have a health test to find out if there is a problem with balance, or a more serious problem that could be treated. In some cases, medication can make a person dizzy, for instance, and they will then fall, so a visit to the GP for a review of medication would be sensible.

Occupational therapists demonstrated how to prevent falls around the home and advised getting rid of loose rugs, and to make sure the floor area is clear of anything that can cause a fall, such as newspapers, toys, or other items. Falls in the garden can be caused by wet leaves, or tools being left out. It is seen as funny when a person steps on a hoe, it ricochets and hits them in the face and a fall is the result, but if there are broken bones, then the next few months won't be funny for the victim – or their carers.

I also learned that it is not always a good idea to help a person who has fallen to stand up; they may still be dizzy or, even worse, have broken bones which can become even worse if a person is encouraged to stand. So, the first step is to make sure the person is ready to stand, and has no serious injury. This can be difficult to assess so it is sensible to call the paramedics.

For myself, the most important lesson was 'mindfulness'. I know why I fall over. It's because I am thinking of half a dozen things at once, and usually rushing. So now I take time to contemplate the view, step carefully, and try, desperately, not to rush, although my normal walking speed is fast. Another problem is that, walking fast, I don't 'pick up my feet' (I can hear Mother telling me not to scuff my shoes) and therefore catch the tiniest raised pavement. Now I am trying to adjust my walking pattern.

So, if someone is prone to falls, it may be a good idea for them to attend a class in mindfulness; which simply means to enjoy the moment, rather than worrying about the next activity of the day.

Finally, why should we, as solicitors, worry about falls? It's because many of our clients are elderly and we know that a fall can be the shock that creates an emergency, and it's often at that time we're contacted to prepare lasting powers of attorney so that others can help – not a good time to deal with complex legal matters.

Jennifer



What is this 'Hygge' everyone is talking about?

Perhaps like us you have been hearing this new term being bandied about in the national press and are intrigued to find out more about this new 'fad'.

Well after a bit of investigation hygge (pronounced 'hoo-guh') is the new choice in lifestyle – originally from Denmark it is essentially the art of 'cosiness' and we Brits are all being encouraged to strive to achieve it.

Enjoying the simple things in life that money can't buy is the root of it; perhaps just having dinner with family or friends, snuggling up in front of a fire with that book you've been meaning to start are all examples of hygge. Basically, we need to slow down and appreciate the truly finer things in life.

According to a light-hearted article on Marie Claire's website the top tips to achieve perfect hygge are as follows:

- One: Spend all of your money on candles
- Two: Put your mobile phones in a box/upcycled wooden crate
- Three: Burn your old socks and knit new ones, instantly
- Four: Buy a fondue set and melt all of our food

But on a serious note perhaps we should all take a leaf out of the Dane's book, sounds wonderful to us!

Julie



Willing the cat?

You want to make a will and you believe you've thought of everything – the foreign property, the grandchildren and even what would happen in a global accident. In fact, we try to help clients by providing a questionnaire that makes them think about such matters before they come to make their wills. But more often than not a 'dear' member of most people's testamentary wishes is forgotten – the family pet.

What happens to Tammy the cat or Bonzo the dog, or even your noble horse or donkey when you are no longer there to care for them? Would you, like most, assume that the executors of their will have the responsibility and will care for them – but will they? And how?

Surveys have said that an average dog or cat – not even thinking about larger animals – cost an average of £17,000 during their lifetime, covering food, inoculations and vets' fees.

We're not suggesting that the house and garden be left to the pet. This is not possible as animals cannot inherit money or property, but who would be responsible for ensuring the pet is cared for?

Although a specific legacy cannot be left to animals, a direction can be made for the executors to reserve a certain sum to pay for the care of the animal and can also specify how that care can be carried out. Quite often a companion dog walker will be specified – but ask them first – and perhaps leave them a legacy to thank them for their kindness in taking the dog. Quite often charities will take healthy animals but again it is only courteous to leave them a legacy in appreciation of them taking the animal. And, if the estimated cost is really £17,000 then consider whether a legacy of £500 will really be helpful.

Now included in our initial questionnaire we hope that no pet will be forgotten in future.

Jennifer

And finally...

Can we all make a difference? Fantastic new ways of trying to fundraise and help combat loneliness are being championed by various mediums and perhaps we can help in 2017.

The charity The Silver Line which was set up by Dame Esther Rantzen has published that over the festive period they received one call every minute from lonely and isolated older people.

They have launched their 'digital detox for the New Year' (#SilentFor7) Dame Esther says 'imagine yourself going 7 days without chatting to anyone'.

Many old people live just like this; they go a whole week with no one to talk to as Jennifer has mentioned on page 2.

So to raise awareness, we're asking you to go silent on social media for 7 days, and donate £7 to help The Silver Line.

To show your support, it'd be great if you could change your profile picture to a silent selfie (just like mine) so people know you're offline.'

Take a look at www.thesilverline.org.uk for further information.

There are also fantastic volunteering opportunities highlighted before Christmas by Good Morning Britain who ran their '1 Million Minutes' campaign. Viewers were asked to pledge a minimum of 30 minutes of their time to help in whatever way they were able. As this newsletter goes to print an amazing total of 42,692,550 minutes has been pledged.

The Silver Line, Royal Voluntary Service, Age UK Surrey and Campaign to End Loneliness all offer specific volunteering opportunities.

But for those more adventurous types perhaps consider taking part in challenge events such as triathlons, abseiling, obstacle courses or skydiving for a good cause.

Perhaps 2017 will be the year when time becomes more important than money.

Julie

