

Dudley

WINTER 2011

together

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LARGE PRINT VERSION

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DUDLEY COMMUNITY



PARTNERSHIP
achieving together

FEEDBACK

**If you have any comments to make or suggestions about
future editions of Dudley together please contact us.**

**Send your letter to The Editor, at Dudley together,
Marketing and Communications, Dudley Council,
FREEPOST*, MID22308, Dudley, DY1 1BR.**

Letter from the top

Welcome to the winter edition of Dudley together and may I take this opportunity to wish all readers a very happy Christmas.

Looking back over 2011, it has been a challenging year for many residents and businesses in the borough with the economic downturn affecting most of us. But ambitious projects like the borough's bid for city status, the regeneration of Dudley town centre and a £2.6 million investment at Priory Park highlight our hope for signs of growth and employment in 2012.

For some people like Alison Gjoka (page 5), volunteering at a jobs' club is proving a great way to help switch careers and help others. There are so many opportunities to volunteer, so why not make it one of your New Year resolutions?

Another great way to kick-start your New Year is to get out and get walking this winter. Why not make the most of the borough's wonderful organised walks which are free, fun and a great way to get fit? Turn to page 13 to find out more. The magazine has our usual round up of news from the partners who make up Dudley Community Partnership and who also wish you all a Happy New Year. I hope you enjoy this edition.

Andy Gray

Chief Executive, Dudley Council for Voluntary Services

999 time-wasters put real lives at risk

Emergency services are warning against time wasters this winter as they gear up for one of the busiest times of the year.

West Midlands Ambulance Service says only ten per cent of the 999 calls it receives are genuinely life-threatening. Last winter, one Dudley man called the service to check what the temperature was outside, while a woman from Stourbridge called paramedics to resuscitate a pigeon she found in the snow.

Bosses at the service say while those are extreme cases many other calls need NHS treatment but not necessarily from the ambulance service or A&E at Russell's Hall Hospital.

Among the 2,500 emergency calls the trust receives every day, they help people who are in cardiac arrest and only have minutes to live; they deliver babies over the phone and keep callers calm who have just been involved in a road traffic accident.

Sandy Brown, WMAS director of nursing, said: "Many people that call have relatively 'minor' conditions. If our crews are dealing with them, they may not be able to get to the patients with life-threatening illness or injury as quickly as we would want, which ultimately could put lives at risk.

"If you are unlucky enough to become unwell, please consider where you access the NHS so that you can choose well."

Cautionary steps to take before calling 999

Calling 999 or attending an A&E department should be for life-threatening emergencies only. The guide below gives some advice on the steps to take before alerting the emergency services:

Step 1: Self care.

Step 2: Your local pharmacy.

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Step 3: Call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 or log on to www.nhs.uk

Step 4: Use a 'walk-in' centre or minor injuries unit.

Step 5: See your GP. There is also an out-of-hours service.

Step 6: In an emergency, go to A&E or call 999 for an ambulance.

Self-help with issues of the mind

A new series of self-help groups has been set up across the borough to help people with mental health conditions.

Dudley Mind secured a £1,000 grant from Dudley PCT to run the groups.

The self-help groups are aimed at people struggling with common mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety and post-natal depression.

Martin Mueller, Dudley Mind chief executive, said: "Past experience shows how helpful these groups can be, as members offer each other mutual support, exchange ways of coping, and realise that they are not alone in their feelings."

Dudley Mind, which is based at the Mary Stevens Centre, Hagley Road, Stourbridge, will provide trained staff to help people set up and run the new groups.

Valerie Little, director of Public Health, added: "I am delighted that Dudley Public Health is able to fund this innovative approach to self-help groups which give people the opportunity to shape the services they receive, thus promoting their self-esteem and combating the isolation often faced by people experiencing mental distress."

To find out more call 01384 442938 or 01384 836391

New drop-in club is proving just the job

Help to find employment has been boosted in Dudley with the launch of a new job club.

And it is down to one volunteer that the new club is proving a success. Alison Gjoka, from Pensnett, is

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helping run the weekly club based at Woodside Community Centre. Free advice and support is now on offer at the centre in Highgate Road. Every Tuesday from 10am-2pm Alison is on hand to help people search and apply for work as well as assisting them with their CVs. She said: “I worked for 11 years as a project support officer at Npower. I left recently because I wanted a change in direction in my career. I am keen to find a career which is more people-focused and so this kind of voluntary work not only helps others but is also very useful to me.”

Anyone is welcome to drop in at the job club which within weeks of opening has already helped people find work. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Dudley Volunteer Centre, which helped Alison find her placement. Call 01384 267425.

New Saturday opening for sexual health checks

New sexual health clinics are now open on a Saturday morning at Russells Hall Hospital. Specialist nurses run the clinics between 10am and 1pm (doors close at 12.30pm) and are available to carry out a number of tests for sexually transmitted infections. The drop-in clinics are for people of any age or gender who are sexually active and who are:

- Starting or ending a relationship.
- Exposed to infection.
- Worried about sexually transmitted infections.
- Free of symptoms but want peace of mind.

The clinics are run by the new Dudley Group Sexual Health Service in the Genito-Urinary Medicine Department in the North Wing at Russells Hall Hospital. Patients who need a follow up are guaranteed an appointment the following Monday morning. If people already have symptoms, they should attend the clinic during the week. Clinic times are advertised on www.dudleygroup.nhs.uk

Student art gets gallery showcase

A new art gallery has opened in Dudley showcasing the work of talented students. Dudley College has launched The Cube Gallery at its Broadway campus. It gives creative students the opportunity to exhibit their artwork as well as showcasing community projects and collaborative work with local creative industries. Ben Gamble, curriculum manager, said: “The Art, Design and Media departments are really excited to be given the opportunity to display and make work especially for this contemporary space. We have some highly talented students here at Dudley College and to be able to showcase their work is fantastic.”

Every little helps

Dudley’s new Tesco Extra store in Birmingham New Road has sponsored the Christmas tree in Stone Street Square this year. Steve Goswell, store manager, said: “We chose to support this event as it is all about bringing the community together.” It is the first time the event has been sponsored and is part of the council’s aim of working with local businesses to promote trade and shopping in the borough’s towns.

Health & Well-being

How Andy coped with sudden blindness

When Andy Main visited his optician he thought he just needed a better pair of glasses. A month later and with deteriorating eyesight, he was told by doctors at Birmingham’s City Hospital he was going blind. Six weeks later Andy lost all vision.

“The consultant was pretty blunt,” says Andy,” he just spelled it out ‘Andrew you are going blind and there’s nothing we can do about it’.”

Andy, aged 70 from Wall Heath, was told his sudden

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blindness was as a result of a genetic disorder passed on to him by his mother who had been the carrier. He could have lost his eyesight at any time in his life.

For the former trades union official, who enjoyed an active retirement, the news came as a devastating blow. "To say I am active is an understatement. I am a keen golfer and was secretary of Wyre Forest Golf Club for eleven years, I love cooking, reading and travelling," he says.

Soon after the diagnosis Andy was put in touch with Dudley's Vision Support Services, which he says 'saved my life'.

He was visited by Jane Hollingsworth, a senior rehabilitation worker who helped him and his partner Diane start the long process of adjusting to his new situation.

"I can honestly say if it wasn't for Jane and the support I got from the service I would have probably topped myself I was at such a low ebb," admits Andy.

"Jane came and sat with me and said I could either give in to it or get on with my life and find ways to manage my new condition.

"I got support with the simplest of things. Jane told me how to count bank notes by always folding the twenty notes in half, the tens in quarters and leaving the five pounds flat in my wallet.

"Something as simple as that has given me independence and with independence comes dignity.

"Jane helped me with advice while out walking with my white stick and encouraged me to do what I had always done, walk down to my local pub and buy a pint."

Eighteen months since losing his sight Andy has resumed golf, with help from his friends, he has learned new ways to cook and takes himself off to the pub.

"I have learned how to use my computer again with the

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aid of specialist talking software and I now help train other visually impaired people at college learn to use computers.”

Jane Hollingsworth said: “Andy, like many people who lose their sight, initially focused on the things he’d lost and the things he thought he could no longer do.

“I helped him concentrate on what he could still do and find solutions to help turn things around, find solutions and maintain his independence.”

For more information about Dudley’s Vision Support Services, based at Parkes Hall Centre, Parkes Hall Road, Dudley, call 01384 813090

Specialist support is the key to rehab

Living with visual impairment shouldn’t mean a loss of independence and here in Dudley specialist support is on offer for anyone who needs it.

Across the borough there are hundreds of visually impaired people who get support from Dudley’s Vision Support Service.

And when it comes to support the range of help available is as broad as it can possibly be to help each person live independently.

Dudley Vision Support Services are available to people whether they are registered as sight impaired or not.

Andrea Pope-Smith, director of Adult, Community and Housing Services, said: “We have a team of specialist rehabilitation workers and assistants who visit people in their own homes to assess how the service can help a person overcome many of the problems associated with sight loss and help maintain independence.”

Help on hand covers everything from equipment, such as magnifiers and the loan of specialist aids like talking clocks, watches and scales, to advice and training to get around safely.

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“Our service aims to help visually impaired people with their mobility, communication and independent living, either through aids, equipment or training,” says Andrea Pope-Smith

The service works alongside lots of local voluntary organisations for visually impaired people including the Beacon Centre for the Blind, the Thomas Pocklington Trust and Dudley Carers’ Network.

Lots on offer for adults with physical disabilities

A host of new activities are on offer at a Dudley centre for adults with disabilities.

Queens Cross Network, in Wellington Road, has been refurbished and now offers more opportunities and activities for people aged 18-60 with a physical or sensory disability.

The centre now has a well-equipped gym, library, quiet room, gardens, computer suite and catering kitchens, as well as a café, managed and run by the people who use the service.

The centre is open between 9am-4pm Monday to Friday and visitors are welcome to drop in find out more about it or call 01384 813460.

New support gateways for those with dementia

Three one-stop-shops for people with dementia have recently opened their doors.

The dementia gateways are at Roseville Centre in Coseley, Brettell Lane Centre, Amblecote and Brett Young Centre, Halesowen.

It is estimated that there are more than 3,800 people in the borough with dementia.

The gateways provide support from a range of professionals working in the health, social care and voluntary sectors. They also provide carers support

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services, specialist dementia care staff, telecare and telehealth information and equipment loan services.

And they offer day respite for carers as well as day opportunities for people with dementia.

More information on the dementia gateways is available from Dudley Council's access to social care helpline on 0300 555 0055.

Safety

Silent alarm sounds warning for bogus callers

Victims of burglary are being helped to feel safer and more secure through the supply of bogus caller alarms. The alarms, which are fitted close to a home owners' front door, are activated by pressing a button which then sends a silent alarm.

The alarm triggers a call to Dudley Telecare Service's 24 hour monitoring centre, who can listen in and if necessary request an emergency response from the police to the property. Because the equipment operates silently it doesn't alert bogus callers at the door that the police have been called. Currently more than 109 bogus caller alarms have been fitted as a part of the safety drive by West Midlands Police and Dudley Council.

Karen Bridgewater, from Dudley Telecare Services, said: "These alarms help victims of burglary, as well as helping prevent crimes taking place in the first place. The alarms reassure older people that the police can be summoned immediately if required."

PC Angela Hodgetts, based at Brierley Hill Police Station, added: "We want to help older people feel more secure and feel able to live life independently and crime-free for longer in their own homes."

Dudley Telecare Service can be contacted on 0300 555 2040.

People have their say on safety issues

Burglaries, littering and dog fouling were among the top concerns of residents who took part in a recent community safety event.

More than 50 residents raised their concerns at the annual Face the People event organised by safe & sound, Dudley's community safety partnership.

Overall crime in Dudley continues to fall as the borough remains the safest in the West Midlands, and safe & sound wants to ensure it stays that way. At the interactive event people had the chance to inform safe & sound priorities for the coming year by using electronic keypads to vote for the issues that were of greatest concern to them. Sue Haywood, deputy head of community safety, said: "The Face the People session gave the panel a chance to listen and respond to their concerns. The information will help us set the partnership's priorities for the coming year."

Net closing on fraudsters a crackdown continues

A fraud hotline and website allowing people to report suspicions of fraud, theft or corruption in complete confidence has been launched by Dudley Council.

The site is aimed at ensuring council money and property is protected.

Fraudulent use of council money can include people getting money they are not entitled to from the council, such as payments for contracts, supplies or grants. It can also include stealing or misusing council resources, such as stores, equipment, vehicles or buildings.

There are three ways to report fraud. These include visiting the council's fraud reporting website at www.dudley.gov.uk/fraud, calling the dedicated hotline on 01384 814242, where you can record a message.

Alternatively write to Dudley Council's head of audit services at Dudley Council, Council House, Priory Road, Dudley, West Midlands, DY1 1HF.

Why not resolve to be a volunteer?

If your New Year's resolution is to make a difference and to have more fun, why not volunteer? It could be the one resolution that keeps giving all year round, not only to yourself but to your whole community...

Volunteering can not only help you to give something back while doing things you enjoy, it can also help you to meet interesting people, boost your confidence or improve your CV.

Eileen Fielding, from Dudley Volunteer Centre, said: "We hope this is the one resolution that everyone will enjoy keeping. It doesn't matter whether you have got plenty of time or just a few hours to spare, we can help you to find something that is just right for you. From helping with shopping or raising money, to mentoring young people or becoming a trustee, the possibilities are endless."

Volunteering could change your life

Most volunteers will happily tell you that they don't expect to be thanked for what they do - they simply give their time because they enjoy helping others.

Take Gurcharan Bedi and Doreen Collins, who both received Dudley CVS Volunteer Awards a few months ago. Although they have clocked up decades as volunteers, they still insist that they are not doing anything out of the ordinary.

Gurcharan Bedi is a retired Round Oak Steelworks employee and vice chair of the Dudley Sikh Welfare Association.

He is also assistant chair of the Guru Nanak Sikh temple in Dudley and has for many years been an avid campaigner and a successful fundraiser.

When Gurcharan is not speaking up for things to improve the safety of his community, he can be found helping to organise charity football matches and car washes, or asking local businesses to donate to Cancer Support or

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Mary Stevens Hospice, in memory of his late wife. In the last few years alone he has raised thousands of pounds but still said: “I don’t know why anyone would want to nominate me for an award, I haven’t done anything special.”

Eighteen years ago Doreen Collins was named vice chair of the Dudley Parkinsons Group and still has this role today, in addition to being the busy group’s welfare officer. Doreen not only helps to arrange activities and trips, she has also visited many people with Parkinsons including those who have recently been diagnosed, to offer information and support.

But Doreen’s journey didn’t begin there. In 1940 she was awarded an Empire Day certificate for collecting money and knitting socks for servicemen. She later went on to join St John Ambulance and in 1992 she became a serving sister, receiving a medal on behalf of the Queen by the Duke of Gloucester.

Now in her eighties Doreen is showing no signs of slowing down. She said: “I enjoy everything I do and the people I meet and support feel like part of my family.”

Doreen and Gurcharan are both proof that if you get the volunteering bug, it could become a life long passion. To find out how it could change your life and make a great start to 2012 contact Dudley Volunteer Centre on 01384 573381 or email volunteer@dudleycvs.org.uk

Business

City of Dudley title is now within our grasp

Make supporting Dudley’s bid for city status your New Year resolution is the message from council bosses.

As the borough looks to the Queen’s Jubilee year, business leaders, politicians and other key players are stepping up the campaign for city status. Dudley Council

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submitted its bid in May, highlighting Dudley's rich history and heritage as the jewel in the crown of the application. Dudley borough is up against the likes of Luton, Milton Keynes, St Austell, Medway, Tower Hamlets, Reading, Bolton, Stockport, Perth, Ballymena, Guildford, Ipswich, Wrexham and Middlesbrough. John Polychronakis, Dudley Council chief executive, said: "With the New Year on the horizon, we want people to really get behind Dudley in 2012 and make it their resolution to back our bid."

The bid has been submitted on behalf of the whole borough, with each of the four main towns offering its own unique strengths. The winner will be announced in the first half of 2012 to mark the Queen's Jubilee. To read the bid document, go to www.dudley.gov.uk

■ Are you proud of where you live? What are your favourite parts of the borough? Let us know on facebook at the Dudley borough page. Also, share great pictures of the borough at the council's Flickr site from www.dudley.gov.uk

A new chapter for 2012...

■ Dudley College opening its multi-million pound vocational centre, the first stage of the new learning quarter.

■ A new £6 million archive and local history building.

■ The Castle Hill regeneration, with new zoo offices and infrastructure.

■ The regeneration of Dudley's historic Market Place.

■ The renovation of 19 prominent buildings in Dudley town centre as part of the Townscape Heritage initiative.

Spring date for park makeover

Groundwork is set to get under way on a £2.6 million investment at Dudley's Priory Park this spring. It follows a

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successful bid by The Friends of Priory Park and Dudley Council to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Big Lottery Fund (BIG). Work includes the redevelopment of the pavilion, installation of lighting for the ruins, tree planting, new public toilets and repairs to path surfaces. It also includes new artwork and sculptures, and resurfacing of the five-a-side football pitch and bowling green.

To find out more about the Priory Park project, visit www.dudley.gov.uk/priorypark or call 01384 816993.

Training advice

If you're a young person aged 16-24 looking to gain qualifications and skills to further your career, there are more than 160 different apprenticeships available.

February 6-10 is National Apprenticeship week, when you can find out what's on offer in Dudley. Or go along to the free Real Apprentice event on February 2 from 2-8pm at Brierley Hill Town Hall to find apprenticeships and get advice. Visit www.apprenticeships.com for details.

Scenting the sweet taste of success

The owners of a new sweet shop are hoping to taste success after spotting a gap in the market for sugar-free treats. The Olde Sucke Shop has just opened in Stone Street Square, Dudley, offering a huge variety of sugar and sugar-free sweets and chocolates. "We've got a fantastic selection of sweets that would make Willy Wonka proud," says owner Paula Goodyear. Paula and daughter Suzanne, together with Brady Small, run the old-fashioned shop which also takes orders for sweet trees,

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gift baskets and party bags. To get in touch, contact Paula on 07891 400322.

Environment

A warm home for less - the new Green Deal

Housing and businesses are throwing away a staggering £3 billion of energy every year because they aren't being fuel efficient.

Many homes are poorly insulated, appliances are left on standby and thermostats are used inefficiently, resulting in families and business spending more than they need to on their gas and electricity bills.

As part of a new energy bill the government is introducing two new programmes to combat the problem; The Green Deal for householders and The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) targeting the most vulnerable.

Under the scheme households could get up to £10,000 to spend on a range of approved energy-saving measures such as double glazing, insulation, new heating systems with these outgoings being paid back over the next 25 years through savings made in energy bills.

Funding will be provided by private companies, with firms such as B&Q, Tesco, British Gas having already expressed interest in getting involved.

In Dudley the council will keep residents updated over the next few months on how the Green Deal will benefit borough households.

In the meantime the council's free phone Dudley energy advice line is still offering free, impartial, up-to-the minute information on the best energy supplier for

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people's own circumstances; as well as information on the current energy schemes and grants available.

As energy prices continue to rise everyone is encouraged to make sure they are getting the very best energy deals possible for their money. Call the advice line on 0800 29 22 679.

Energy Heroes! Time to do your bit for the planet

Calling all potential Energy Heroes! We are calling on local people, businesses, community groups and schools in the borough to start taking action to reduce their energy and fuel use.

Not only will this save money, it could also mean you will be eligible to enter the Energy Hero Awards next spring. If you demonstrate the effects of what you have achieved, such as by measuring how much money and energy you save, you could be in with a chance of winning an award and prize.

Stumped for ideas? There's lots you could do, such as switching to low energy lighting, reducing car journeys, promoting energy saving in your community, organisation or school or installing renewable technologies such as solar panels. For some ideas, have a look at our case studies and previous winners of Energy Heroes awards at www.dudleylsp.org

The annual Energy Heroes Awards aims to showcase the great work being carried out across Dudley borough to reduce energy use and the impact of climate change.

Saving energy also saves cash and in some cases this can be a significant amount. If you have any energy-saving ideas or want any advice, contact Clare Palmer 0138 813163 or Helen Swift 814403.

Planners give new archive centre the green light

Work is set to start on a new Dudley archive and local history centre in the New Year. Dudley Council's

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development control committee approved plans which will see the current archive service relocated to a state-of-the-art two-and-a-half storey building in Tipton Road, next to the Black Country Living Museum. The plans followed public consultation during the summer. Responses were very positive, with respondents agreeing that preserving documents about the history and heritage of the borough was extremely important.

News Extra

On your marks for Olympic flame relay visit

The Olympic flame will make its way through Dudley as part of the torch relay for London 2012, it has been announced.

It will pass through Dudley on June 30 as the torch relay makes its way to the Olympic Stadium in London in time for the opening ceremony on July 27. Dudley is one of 1,000 villages, towns and cities confirmed as locations on the Olympic flame relay route.

Specific dates and details of the route are not being released by the London 2012 Organising Committee (LOCOG) until next year. But Dudley Council has been notified that the torch will pass through the borough on its 70-day journey which will count down to the start of the Olympic Games.

Sebastian Coe, chair of LOCOG, said: "We are extending an invitation to people in the borough to welcome the Olympic Torch Relay during its journey around the UK. I want to encourage people to start planning how they can be part of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and show their support for the inspirational torchbearers."

The Olympic Torch Relay will start at Land's End, Cornwall, on the morning of May 19 before covering an estimated 8,000 miles around the UK.

Team offer advice to young on part-time working

Families who have teenagers looking for part-time work can get all the advice, support and guidance they need from a specialist team.

Dudley Council's education investigation service (EIS) works with employers, parents, schools and other organisations to ensure any young people who work are doing so safely and legally.

There are many benefits to young people having a part-time job, but families need to be aware of the legal restrictions on employment. The law states that young people aged 13 to 16 can work on a part-time basis after school, at weekends or during school holidays. However there are strict rules around employment depending on a young person's age, the number of hours they can work and the type of employment they can do.

Families and employers also need to be aware that, by law, any young person who is employed must be registered for work with Dudley Council, who will issue a work permit.

Employers are being encouraged to sign up to a new EIS code of practice and become recognised as a good practice employer of young people. All employers who do so will be recognised with a certificate which they will be asked to display.

For more information, contact the EIS team on 01384 814317 or 814314, or visit www.dudley.gov.uk and search for the education investigation service.

Schools perform well

Children's services in Dudley are good, according to Ofsted. It once again gave Dudley Council a 'performs well' rating in its annual assessment, noting in some areas that the quality of inspected provision has further improved on last year.

Getting fit - it's a stroll

Walk with us this winter whatever your fitness level and make the most of Dudley's fantastic parks, nature reserves and outdoor spaces – there's so much to see and enjoy for free.

Whether you want to take part in a weekly stroll around a park or have a go at Nordic night walking, there's no excuse not to get out and about.

Dudley Council runs a series of programmes with walk leaders heading weekly short walks, lap walking, longer walks, walks that take in local history and visitor attractions and our higher intensity Nordic walking programme.

And as part of Healthy Towns, weekly guided walks are held from each of the borough's four activity centres at our hubs Huntingtree Park for The Lutley Trail; Netherton Park for the Bumble Hole health walk; Mary Stevens Park for the Stourbridge and Norton Trail and The Dell Stadium for the Fens Pool and Buckpool Trails. For nature lovers the borough's countryside services provides walks and talks on the wildlife, geology and history of six picturesque nature reserves and the historic Leasowes Park. And the borough's grand Himley Hall estate also organises popular walks around its beautifully landscaped grounds.

Most walks are free of charge and are a great way of being active, socialising and having fun with the family.

Whatever your fitness level, you can find a walk that suits both beginners and regular walkers.

To find out more call Kim Braznell, park ranger/physical activity manager on 01384 816992 or 07799 070089 or for walks organised by Dudley Countryside Services call David Keeley on 01384 814189.

Action Heart

The Action Heart cardiac rehabilitation centre provides a

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programme of weekly health walks on Monday and Friday mornings. The walks are open to everyone and are held at different venues every week. For more information call the Action Heart Office on 01384 292233.

Healthy Footsteps programme

Age UK Dudley LEAP (leisure, exercise and activity for people) organises a diverse range of walks for the over 50s. For more information contact Maggie Thompson on 01384 343535 or email leapover60@ageukdudley.org.uk

AW surgery walks

These walks are aimed at patients of Albion House and Withymoor surgeries in Brierley Hill, but everyone is welcome to join them. Walkers meet at different venues each week from nature reserves or canal walks and progression walks with provision for new walkers on slightly shorter routes if necessary. Venues include Baggeridge Park, Himley Hall, Barrow Hill and Fens Pool, Saltwells Nature Reserve, Wordsley Woods, Kinver and Bumble Hole. For more information, contact Balraj Johal on 01384 321848 or 07876 563973, or email balraj.johal@dudley.nhs.uk

Setting up a walk in your area

If you want to set up a health walk in your local community, support is available with training promotion just contact Balraj Johal on 01384 321848 / 07876 563973 or email balraj.johal@dudley.nhs.uk. Alternatively, contact Kim Braznell on 01384 816992 or email kim.braznell@dudley.gov.uk for advice.

Walking can:

- Reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke.
- Lower blood pressure.

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- Reduce high cholesterol.
- Reduce body fat.
- Enhance mental well being.
- Help prevent osteoporosis.
- Reduce the risk of colon cancer.
- Reduce the risk of non insulin dependant diabetes.
- Help to control body weight.
- Help osteoarthritis.
- Help flexibility and co-ordination.

Win a family day out at Dudley Zoological Gardens

Dudley Zoological Gardens is set for a busy 75th anniversary year with plans aplenty throughout 2012. And to start anniversary celebrations, DZG has teamed up with Dudley together to offer two sets of family tickets for a great day out. DZG is unique, a zoo with hundreds of animals set around an 11th century castle. And it's packed with exciting things to see and do, from its Lemur Wood and Wallaby Walkthrough to Lion Ridge, home to the three Asiatic lions, among the rarest animals on the planet.

To be in with a chance of winning the family tickets (two adults and two children) – valid until the end of April – simply answer the following question

■ How old is Dudley Zoological Gardens next year?
Send your answer on a postcard with your name, address and telephone number to Dudley together, DZG ticket competition, Marketing and Communications, FREEPOST MID 22308, Dudley, DY1 1BR. The closing date for entries is Tuesday, January 17.

What's on

ENTERTAINMENT

DECEMBER

16 (7.30pm) – Viennese Strauss Christmas Gala, Dudley Concert Hall.

19 (1.30pm) – The Road To Zanzibar, matinee film, Stourbridge Town Hall.

FEBRUARY

1-4 (7.15pm) – Jack and the Beanstalk Pantomime, Halesowen Cornbow Hall. Presented by Startime Variety.

APRIL

12 (1pm) – Bob The Builder, Stourbridge Town Hall.

EXHIBITIONS

DECEMBER

17-20 (10.30-3.30pm) – Santa at the cone, Red House Glass Cone, Wordsley. Booking essential on 01384 812750

Until 31 – All I want for Christmas, Red House Glass Cone, Wordsley.

JANUARY

Until 14 – Dudley Society of Artists Annual Exhibition, Dudley Museum & Art Gallery.

Until 4 – Cromwell at the Blue Boar, Dudley Museum & Art Gallery.

FEBRUARY

Until 19 – Light Fantastic, Broadfield House, Kingswinford.

EVENTS

DECEMBER

17 & 18 (10am-5pm) – Snow White & Santa, Dudley Canal Trust. Book on 01384 236275.

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DANCE

Mondays (12.45-3.30pm) – Tea dance, Brierley Hill Civic Hall.

Mondays (8-10.45am) – Ceroc, Brierley Hill Civic Hall.

Tuesdays (8.30am-10.30pm), Midland Amateur Dancers Club Ballroom & Latin Dance Practices, Halesowen Cornbow Hall.

Wednesdays – Ballroom beginners (6.45-7.30pm), improvers (7.30-8.15pm), Brierley Hill Civic Hall.

Thursdays (2-4pm) – Tea dance, Halesowen Cornbow Hall.

Thursdays (6.30-7.30pm) – Zumba Workout, Halesowen Cornbow Hall.

Fridays (7.30-11.50pm) – Ceroc Groove, Jive, Sala and Rock'n'Roll, Halesowen Cornbow Hall.
(booking essential)

WALKS

booking essential

DECEMBER

24 & 26 – Christmas Eve and Boxing Day, The Leasowes. Walks to get you into the Christmas spirit. Register at 9.45am for 10am start at The Leasowes Park, Wardens' Base, off Mucklow Hill, Halesowen. Moderate walk which lasts about one hour.

29 – Christmas walk. Help shed the Christmas pounds around Sedgley, visiting The Britannia, famous for its unchanged tap room. Register at 10.45am for 11am start. Walks are approximately three hours including 20-minute coffee break. Meet at the front forecourt of the Red Lion, Bull Ring, Sedgley.

JANUARY

2 – New Year at Himley. Blow the cobwebs away by joining the senior warden on a brisk 10km walk taking

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in both Himley and Baggeridge Parks and South Staffs Railway Walk. Appropriate clothing and footwear should be worn. Free event but booking essential on 01384 817817. 1.15pm for 1.30pm start. Meeting point – Himley Park, Himley Road, Himley,

* To find out more, call Kim Braznell, park ranger/physical activity manager, on 01384 816992 or 07799 070089.

LEISURE CENTRES

Why not visit one of the borough's leisure centres call:

Crystal Leisure Centre,
Bell Street, Stourbridge.
01384 812910.

Dudley Leisure Centre, Wellington Road, Dudley.
01384 812815.

Halesowen Leisure Centre, Great Cornbow, Halesowen.
01384 812800.

Dell Stadium, Bryce Road, Pensnett. 01384 812943.

LIBRARIES

Find out what's on at your local library at www.dudley.gov.uk/libraries, or call:

Brierley Hill Library
- 01384 812874.

Dudley Library - 01384 815560.

Halesowen Library
- 01384 812982.

Sedgley Library
- 01384 812790.

Stourbridge Library
- 01384 812945.

CONTACTS

Dudley Museum & Art Gallery, St James's Road, Dudley.

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Tel 01384 815575. www.dudley.gov.uk/museums
Admission free. Open Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm. Closed Bank Holiday Mondays.
Broadfield House Glass Museum, Compton Drive, Kingswinford. Tel 01384 812745. www.glassmuseum.org.uk
Admission free.
Open Tues-Sun, noon-4pm; Bank Holiday Mondays noon-4pm.
The Red House Glass Cone, High Street, Wordsley. Tel 01384 812750. www.redhousecone.co.uk
Admission free. Open Mon-Sun 10am-4pm.
Entertainment in Dudley Live! Box office 01384 812812.
Himley Hall & Park. For opening times, call 01384 817817. www.himleyhall.org
Dudley Zoological Gardens & Castle. Call 01384 215313
Open every day from 10am (except Christmas Day). Last admission: winter 3pm and summer (Easter-September) 4pm. NB. Grounds close 60 minutes after last admission.
Black Country Living Museum. Call 0121 520 8054
Open March-October every day 10am-5pm. November-February closed Monday and Tuesday, open Wednesday to Sunday 10am-4pm.
Dudley Council Plus 0300 555 2345.

Key services in the borough

Housing Repairs Management Centre 0300 555 8283.
Callpay (24-hour automated payment line) 0300 555 7000.
Council tax and housing benefits 0300 555 8100.
Revenues (council tax and business rates) 0300 555 8000.
Emergency duty team (out of hours social care) 0300 555 8574.
Education enquiries 01384 814225. 9am to 5pm weekdays.
Registrar, births, deaths, marriages 0300 555 2345.
By appointment only at Priory Hall, Stourbridge Crown Centre and Dudley Council Plus.

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Social care enquiries: Social care adults 0300 555 0055.

Social care children 01384 814225.

**Dudley Community Partnership, www.dudleyisp.org.
01384 814756.**

**Dudley Council for Voluntary Services (DCVS)
www.dudleycvs.org.uk 01384 267422.**

Dosti 01384 265366 www.dosti.org.uk.

**Citizens' Advice Bureau 01384 816222.
www.adviceguide.org.uk.**

Consumer Direct (Trading Standards) 08454 040506.

Dudley Group of Hospitals, www.dgoh.nhs.uk.

Corbett, Guest and Russells Hall Hospitals 01384 456111.

NHS Direct, www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk 0845 46 47.

**Dudley Primary Care Trust 01384 322002
www.dudley.nhs.uk.**

**Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
Freephone 0800 073 0517.**

Dudley Stop Smoking 0800 0850 652.

Gas: For any gas emergency 0800 111 999 (24 hours).

Jobcentre Plus 0845 606 0234. www.jobcentreplus.org.uk